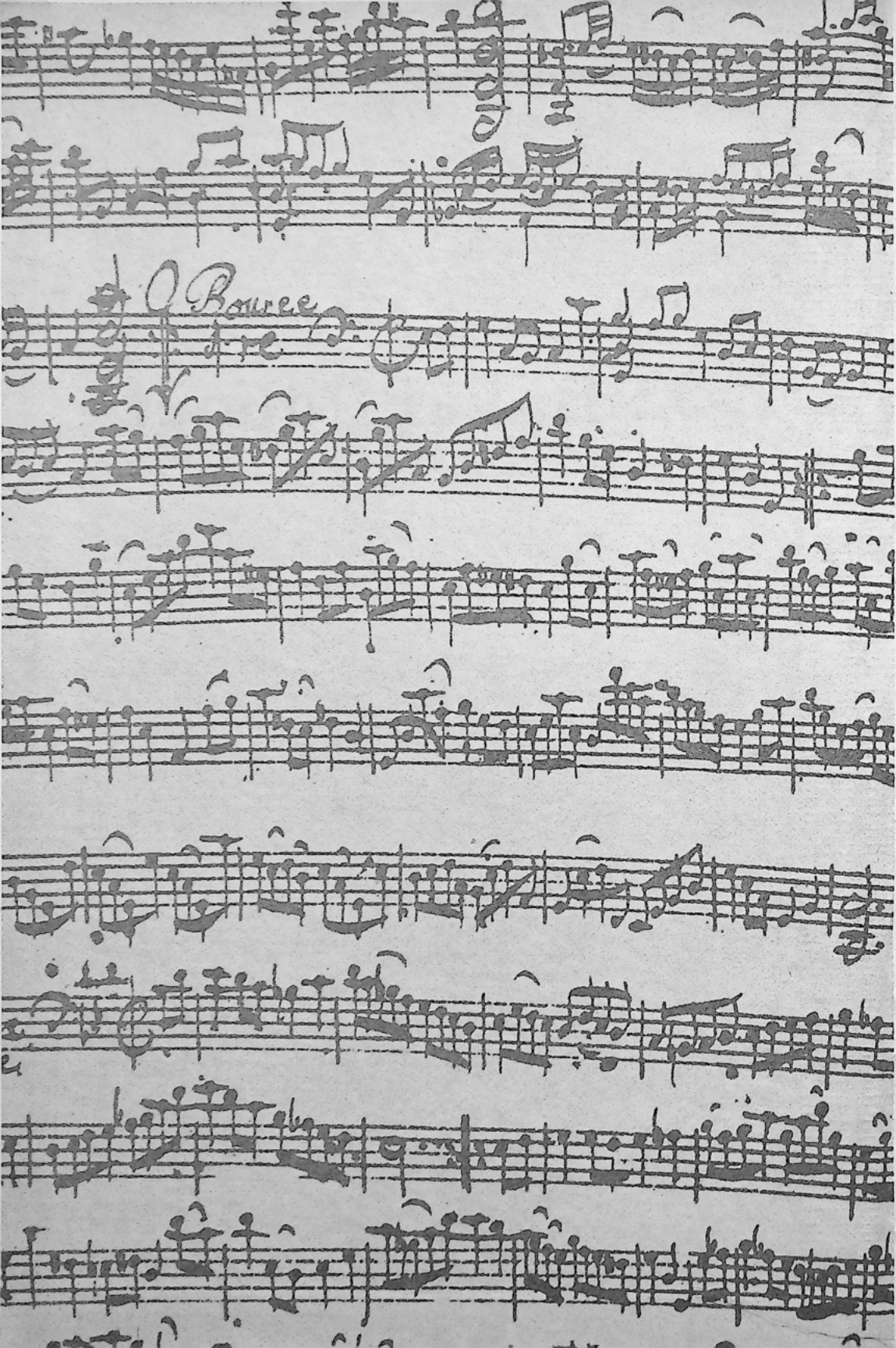
Steven De'ak

David Popper

Foreword by János Starker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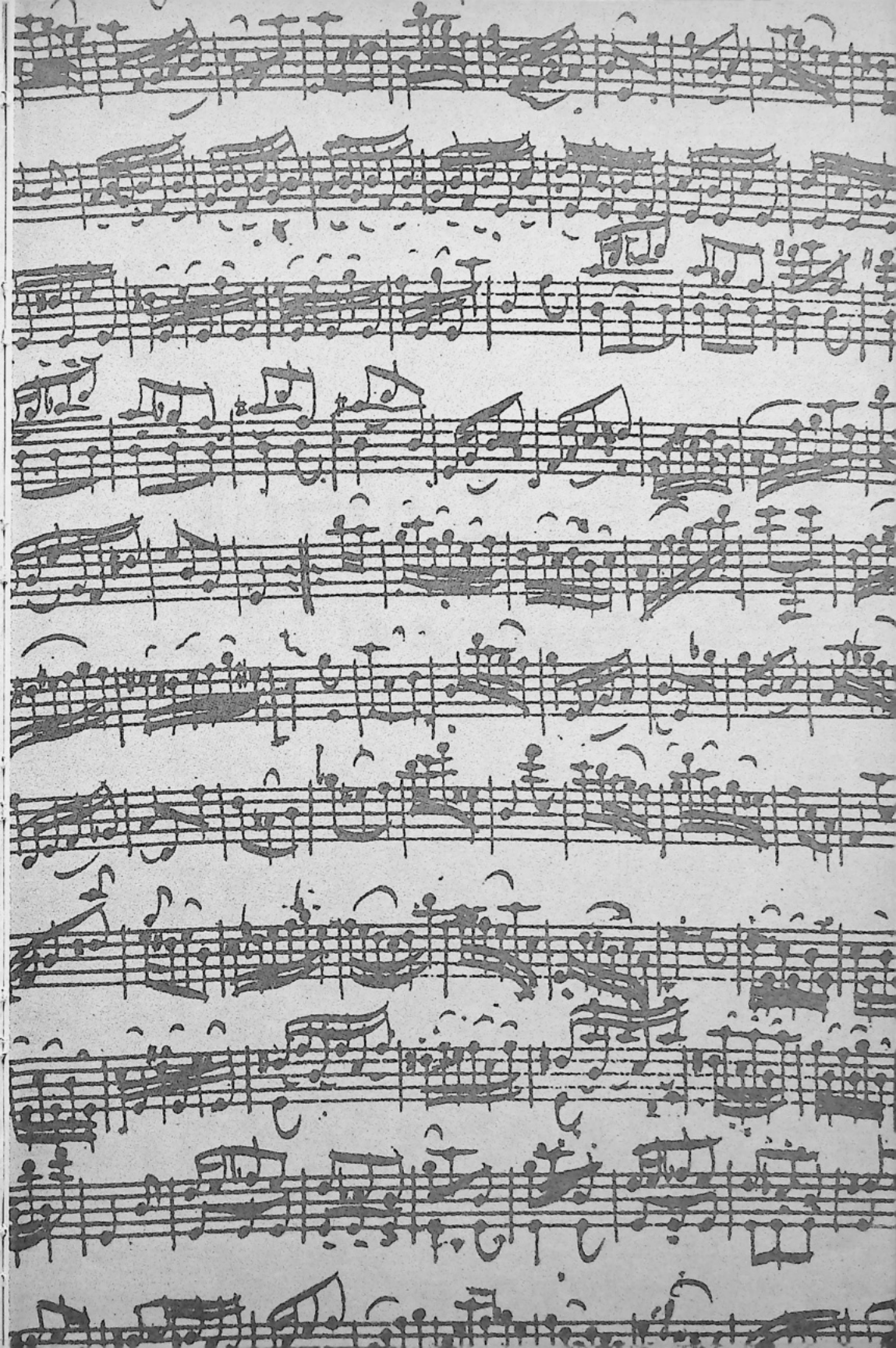
David Popper

by Stephen De'ak

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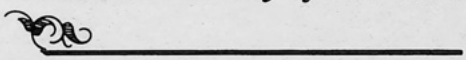
To my esteemed colleagues
of the
Violoncello Society of New York



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János Starker, famous Hungarian-American cellist. Starker studied at the Budapest Academy of Music with Adolf Schiffer, pupil and successor of David Popper.

Preface

A few years ago a magazine called *The Strad* published a cellist's family tree. One of the branches had David Popper, followed by a pupil and successor of his, my teacher, Adolf Schiffer, and then myself. Ever since then I am proud to be "officially" the instrumental grandson of David Popper, notwithstanding my love for my natural progenitors.

No wonder, then, that after 25 years of absence from my native land, Hungary, my first visit led to the studio of David Popper in the Franz Liszt Academy. That is where I spent my childhood under the guidance of Schiffer, seated under the portrait of Popper. It was still there, the face with a benign twinkle in the eye, listening and looking at hundreds of cellists, as if to say "You may not remember who I was, or what I did, but you are playing the works I left for you."

David Popper wrote many compositions and until today no one has better captured the essential elements in cello playing than he. It has often been said that one cannot truly master the cello without having learned Popper's "High School of cello playing." True, no doubt, if one cares about what the cello and cellist can and should do.

This book contains his life. It is timely. Cello playing is slowly nearing its zenith, and Popper's contributions in reaching this stage are immeasureable. We the cellists are forever grateful and indebted to him. And we are certainly grateful to Stephen De'ak for bringing back "the man" to us.

János Starker

Bloomington, Indiana
October 1, 1973

Acknowledgments

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For their helpfulness I wish to thank the staff of the library at the Academy of Music in Budapest, and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (who furnished me with copies of rare old letters). Appreciation is due to the Librarians J.W. Cockburn and Miss Hamilton, and to Librarian and Curator C.S. Minto, all of the City Library of Edinburgh, for research and correspondence. Special appreciation is expressed to Marcia Francis and to Claude Kenneson for assisting in research projects, and to Mici Lukács Popper, who generously shared her personal experiences and her mementos relating to Popper.

Much credit and gratitude go to Orlando Cole, who in 1967 suggested to me that I should preserve my impressions of Popper in some form. His persistent interest in my work helped me greatly in bringing the book to completion.

I am thankful to my dear friends, Miklós Rózsa and Halsey Stevens, for reading the manuscript and offering invaluable advice, and most of all to my wife, Margaret, for her cooperation in countless ways, her reassurance in my efforts, and her tireless work in helping to edit the manuscript.

David Popper

David Popper, one of the greatest masters of his instrument of all times, was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, on June 16, 1843 (although some authorities give the date as June 18, 1846). At the Prague Conservatoire, he learned the art of cello playing from George Goltermann, and he soon gave evidence of the possession of a remarkable talent.

Starting in 1863, he commenced those numerous concert tours throughout Europe which extended over his lifetime, and where he acquired fame as an excellent and cultivated soloist and as a highly gifted composer of exquisite solo compositions for the cello. Popper's successful appearance as a soloist at the Carlsruhe Music Festival (March 29, 1865) was especially important in advancing his early career, as it brought his name and brilliant cellistic abilities to the attention of the eminent musicians of the day, who were in attendance. From the period 1868 through 1873, he was the solo cellist of the Royal Opera Orchestra in Vienna. At the same time he was a member of the famous Hellmesberger String Quartet, which included the young Adolph Brodsky as second violinist (later to be the first to perform the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto).

In 1872 Popper married the distinguished pianist, Sophie Menter, from whom he was divorced in 1886. Since 1896, he occupied the position of Professor of Violoncello and Chamber Music at the Royal Conservatoire in Budapest; there he was the teacher of many excellent, well-grounded cellists. He was the cellist of the well-known Hubay-Popper String Quartet. Popper died in Baden, near Vienna, on August 7, 1913.

Several of Brahms' chamber music works were performed for the first time in public (from manuscript) by the composer (at the piano), with Hubay (violin) and Popper (cello) as his colleagues. Casals sometimes referred to Popper as "the old Maestro." Popper's tone was said to be large and full of sentiment, his intonation faultless, his execution highly finished and his style classical. Among his contemporaries there was hardly his equal, and none superior. Leading cellists of the era were: Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901), Karl Davidov (1838-1889), Robert Hausmann (1852-1909), Joseph Hollmann (1852-1927), Julius Klengel (1859-1933), and Hugo Becker (1863-1941).

Popper's abilities as a composer for his instrument are almost unrivalled. His compositions for the cello have been characterized as being of "extremely graceful fancy and the most delicate and finished workmanship." Popper's published cello works included: four concertos; numerous (at one time well-established, popular encore) cello pieces; Serenade Orientale, Op. 18; Gavotte in D, Op. 23; Tarantelle, Op. 33; Elfentanz, Op. 39; the suite "Im Walde," Op. 50; Hungarian Rhapsody, Op. 68; and the Requiem for Three Cellos (first performed by Popper, Delsart, and Howell in London, on Nov. 25, 1891). His important cello methods are: *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels* (40 studies), Op. 73; and 10 *mittelschwere grosse Etuden* (preparatory studies to Op. 73), Op. 76.

Alexander Broude

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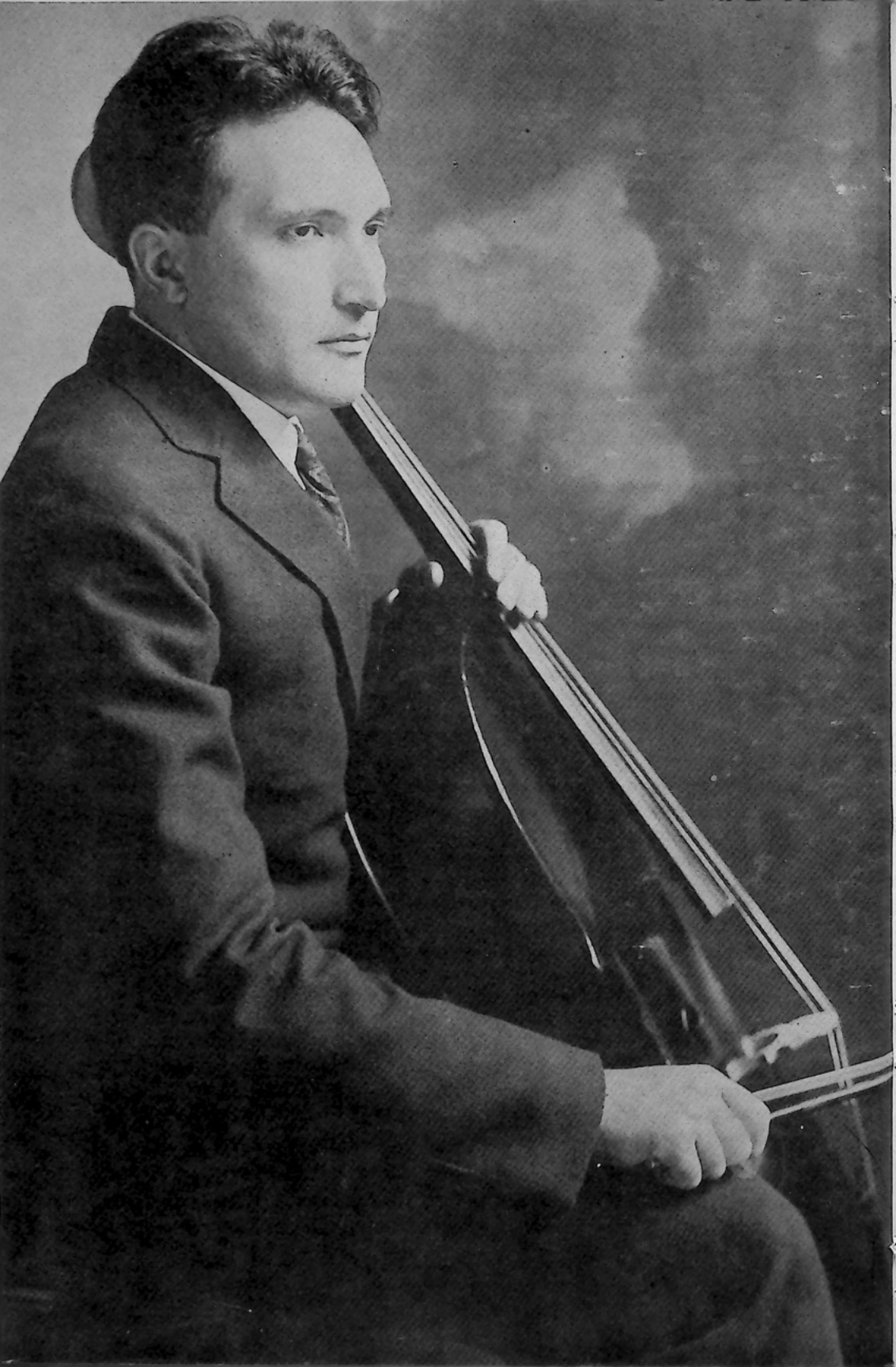


Introduction

When I began to seriously consider writing a biography of David Popper, he had been dead for over fifty-six years. During those intervening years I had witnessed the gradual fading of the once illustrious name of a man whom I had loved and respected in my youth.

Even though I was close to the Master during the last year of his life—as close as anybody among his pupils at that time—I was not then equipped with enough experience and insight, due to my youth, to observe objectively the artist and man for a future essay of this type. However, memory and deductive evaluation have helped to reinterpret and revive the dim past.

The gathering of source material pertaining to my work became more and more problematic as the years went by. There are not many today who knew Popper, and heard him on concerts. Fortunately I was given, by a former pupil of Popper—a lady of great generosity—a collection of old reviews, letters, criticisms, interviews, and autographed pictures with dedications. Some had been her own collection, and some handed over to her by the widow of David Popper, in 1936. Also, I received letters written by Popper from other interested persons who had them in their possession, and helpfully called my attention to them. However, the bulk of Popper's letters and photos that were rescued from Vienna, just before the Nazi invasion, were unfortunately burned in an accidental fire in England.

David Popper was the most celebrated violoncello virtuoso and composer for his instrument during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth. This distinction was more remarkable because there was no shortage of prominent cellist-composers during the era with which we are concerned. G.F. Goltermann, Cossmann, Grützmacher, Piatti and Davidoff, and later, of the younger generation, Hausmann, Deswert, Hollmann, Klengel and Becker all enjoyed renown as virtuosos, composers and teachers.

Popper was so much in demand for concert engagements that he had to limit his other activities, except for composition (a very lucrative field).

On the facing page: Author Stephen De'ak studied with David Popper from 1911 to 1913.

The years between 1872 and 1886 were spent chiefly on tours. His opuses had reached over a hundred works by 1905 when the final fourth volume of his crowning achievement, the *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels* (forty great études), was published.

The popularity of his compositions was sustained by the widespread and enthusiastic interest among everybody who played the cello. These included students, teachers, amateurs, and above all, his contemporary virtuoso-colleagues throughout the western world.

There were hardly ever any cello recitals that did not include one or more pieces by Popper. This general appeal called forth a remark by George Bernard Shaw in 1892: "the inevitable Popper"[1] (even though he described his music as ". . . elegant and fanciful in its lighter phases, and elegiac on its sentimental side." Shaw's double-edged comment reflected his concern at being exposed to an excess of Popper pieces, and also his taste in musical matters. His leaning for the classics, and his enthusiastic support for the "modern" music of Wagner are well documented in his writings. But in spite of this, both cellists and public took great pleasure in Popper's music.

His immediate popularity did not equate with greatness, which is not instantly achieved. Both are transitory. Their duration is sometimes abbreviated by changes in the social and philosophical climate of the times. The artistic stature needs to be exceedingly high to survive the pressure of passing years.

Very few luminaries survive more than one generation. But the creative urge does not lessen—it remains the constantly renewing motive of artistic achievement. The culmination of one artist's contribution silently melts into the embrace of those who follow. Progress touches all men one way or another.

Virtuosity was the preeminent quality expected by the public, and the new bourgeoisie who supported the artists enjoyed displays of the "impossible." Popper gave them much more than virtuosity.

Critics described his technique as flawless and perfectly accurate in the most difficult passages. They spoke of its "lightness," and that it seemed without effort.

The musical style of his performance fired their imagination, expressed in adjectives such as: elegant, graceful, noble, with an intimate personal tone of great beauty, persuasive and sensually rich.

These descriptions came as spontaneous approval of a noticeably different style of performance—hitherto experienced only in the elegance of the Belgian school of string players, such as Vieuxtemps. Popper had been trained in the tradition of the German school—characterized by a robust tone production. His own style reflected strong personal leanings

toward the lighter Belgian school, and by this difference, he became unique among his colleagues.

In their praise, critics claimed that his tone reached the heart of his public, seeming to speak directly to each individual in his audience, in whom the appeal of Popper's playing evoked much emotional response and made the cello as solo instrument more exciting. These attributes were greatly enhanced when he played his own compositions, which often demonstrated previously unknown technical possibilities within the range of "Klangschönheit" (beautiful sound), and good taste.

For almost fifty years his renown was sustained. The time of its descent below the horizon of popularity coincided with the emerging new forces that foreshadowed fresh paths in music, as well as in style of performance.

In a letter written in 1911, he expressed his awareness of change:

". . . There are hardly any living artists—whom you know as well as I do—whose name is so rarely mentioned in newspapers and periodicals, as mine. It happens only in a form that comes up like a tale of olden times, or an ancient lost legend . . ."

These words are part of a lengthy reply to an inquiry about the value of publicity in the promoting of young artists. The touch of bitterness is obvious, and understandable from a subjective point of view. But later in the letter he alleviates the impression of hurt in the following thoughts, showing much fairness, and empathy for the young artists:

". . . Let youth speak! Every artist of importance and with talent has not only the right, but the duty, to assure himself of success in this contemporary materialistic world . . ."

The year of 1913 anticipated the catalysm that came in 1914. Popper was spared from witnessing this universal holocaust.

In the following pages I will try to tell the story of this artist's life which began in the ghetto of Prague, and of his emergence to prominence, thanks to this talent, perseverance, high intellectual qualities, and his wit—which charmed all who knew him.

During the years of his great repute, which lasted into the early twentieth century, no cellist was untouched by his influence either with or without his knowledge. "The inevitable Popper" reached thousands. Those who enjoyed his performances through the decades, those who played his compositions, and those who, even today, spend hours learning the intricate and delightful great études of his *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels,* have had some sort of intimate contact with the magnitude of Popper's art and spirit.

[1] *The World* (London), March 2, 1892.

Chapter I

Beginnings

David Popper at 18 (1861).

In 1969 I visited Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia—and once of Bohemia, under the control of the Hapsburg dynasty. I wanted to look at the place where David Popper was born, spent his first eighteen years, and received his entire musical education (at the Prague Conservatory). I had no such luck as to be able to collect documentary evidence of his official relationship with the school. Some authorities whom I approached were courteous but, at the same time, reluctant to respond to my inquiries.

However, I was richly rewarded by exposing myself to the environment of Popper's youth, visualizing his life there, and imagining its impact on the sensitive soul of the young David. I walked the narrow streets of the former ghetto, inspecting the places of interest—silent, and in their strange solitude holding the secrets of many centuries. The impressions I received made me curious to explore this enclave, and my work on the record of David Popper's life became increasingly urgent.

Of those houses which had been homes for the population, there were not many left. The miserable dwellings had been declared unsanitary in 1893, and the government had mercifully demolished them. Earlier, in 1848, the Hapsburg emperor had granted civil equality to the Jews, and their isolation within the ghetto had come to an end.

When that took place, David was five years old. The change in legal and social status did not bring sudden changes in the life of the Popper family. David's father, Angelus Popper (1812-1891), was Cantor at two synagogues, fulfilling his obligations in both temples alternately. One of these houses of worship, the Pinkas Synagogue—a Renaissance structure built in 1536—today houses a memorial to those executed by the Nazis. Cantor Popper's second service was at the Zigeiner Synagogue—named after its builder, Salkind Zigeiner. The Klaus Synagogue, in Baroque stucco, is the present-day Jewish Museum. All the temples were used as storage dumps during the Nazi invasion. The choice few which escaped demolition have been restored to their original state of architectural beauty.

Several other important buildings of historical interest survive and are still functioning. Today they bear witness to an architectural and decorative art which found expression during the long years of the ghetto restraint.

Roaming the quiet streets I came upon an imposing edifice—The Old-New Gothic Synagogue (remodeled in the twelfth century), the oldest in Europe—and rising above it, just across a small lane, the ancient Jewish Town Hall. Here, civic administration was conducted, and other functions which pertained to matters that held the community together were discharged.

This was the largest of the buildings, four-storied, in Baroque design, and adorned by a tower, with one large clock showing the familiar Arabic numbers. Nestled into the side of the steep roof, below the tower, was a second, smaller clock, having hands which moved from right to left, pointing to Hebraic numerals. The juxtaposition of the clocks seemed a symbolic manifestation of the merging of the two cultures under which the Jews of the ghetto existed.

My vision was caught by a square balcony surrounding the tower just below the upper clock. Its delicately shaped railing had been conceived in exquisite taste by an artist of the first quality. Curves and tendrils in wrought iron, of flower-like forms, seemed to have been bent by the fingers of angels. What was the purpose of this beautiful balcony? It was very high—could it have been used to permit a watchman to dominate the area and observe the mood of the city beyond? Pogroms were not infrequent those days in eastern Europe . . .

A short distance from the Town Hall, the museum displayed old treasures of their heritage: vestments, embroidered with gold and silver threads, tapestries, silver goblets, candle holders, hanging lamps and splendid pieces of wrought iron. The interior was ornamented with much skillful and elaborate detail. There was no lack of ancient books,

whose origins date back centuries. Books on law, ethics, morals and rituals fill the shelves of the library section.

The old ghetto, still called Josephstadt, is located on a triangular area where the river Vltava turns like a bent elbow, as if protectively hugging the old quarter. Down on the banks of the river in centuries past there were baths, and horse merchants would also take their horses there for cleaning and watering.

In the past, this "protective elbow" did not enclose a very suitable place to live because it was flooded annually. But it was home for the Jewish community, and they were able to administer their internal municipal and judicial affairs independently from the Christian section. However, they were obliged to bear many heavy special taxes imposed by the government. Josephstadt, the fifth district of Prague, had been a separate township until the liberation in 1848 when it was joined to the city.

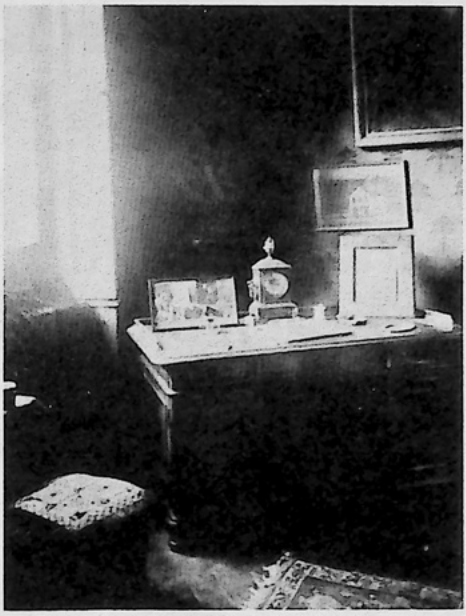
David was eight years old when the family moved to the first district, not far from where he was born and close to where his father performed his duties as cantor. His memories of the gloomy, unhealthy quarters in the ghetto streets had made a lasting impression in his mind. Long, attached rows of unattractive houses lined the narrow streets and lanes which led to the market place and to the Christian section. Small windows in the thick damp walls of the brown and gray houses let in some light from the street. The living unit served as living quarters and at the same time as workshop for the resident's trade.

Misery and poverty were obvious in the exteriors of the ghetto. But there was relative security within the home, where the family life was closely guarded by mutual concern for each other and by a share of intellectual and cultural nourishment derived from tradition and books.

Certain restricted trades were permitted, pertaining to their own community only. Tailors, shoemakers, hatters and butchers were at first allowed. Later, wheelwrights, diamond cutters and furriers, and also artisans and a few physicians were included in the list. But there were always scholars.

Since the beginning of the six hundred years of Prague's activities as a trade center, Jewish merchants had converged upon this spot in Europe and developed their own independent life. It became renowned as the highest Jewish cultural center in all of Europe. The traditional teachings were expertly documented, and kept very active by the development of schools of higher learning to which Jewish students from many lands were drawn.

The profession of musician was accepted, and Jewish musicians were often engaged to play at banquets in the palaces of the nobility in feudal



Above: David Popper's desk in his Budapest studio. Note the photo of Popper on the right hand corner of the desk, circa 1884. Below: Photo featuring bust of Beethoven in Popper's studio.

David Popper's studio at his residence in Budapest.

times. With the development of large orchestras, and the activities of music societies and opera companies, they became more and more involved in the musical community throughout Europe.

To cross the chained barrier which separated the ghetto from the Christian district at those streets leading out of the ghetto, the Jews were required to wear a yellow star for identification. When David was growing up, he saw the congested narrow streets in his neighborhood filled with tradesmen dealing with each other, buying and selling. The ghetto population was between eight and nine thousand souls. Street level stores handled second hand clothing, furniture, and all kinds of wares which sometimes spilled over onto the sidewalk for lack of space. In fact, the crowding of the ghetto region made it necessary that the houses were divided into sections, each having a different owner. Matters of maintenance, real estate, and wills were thus made extremely complicated.

Though the poor were traditionally hospitable and charitable, philanthropy was practiced and organized by the wealthy. An early and famous philanthropist was Mordecai Meisel who built the Town Hall in the sixteenth century. He also contributed a hospital, and a school for poor children.

Money lenders, who often dealt with the Christian sector in their business activities, held a leading role in taxation to finance the community with order and justice, and with schools. The particular attraction which drew foreign Jewish students to Prague was the "yeshibot"—a university-type activity of special Jewish studies not directly involved with the rabbinical disciplines. These students were often very poor, but received needed help and hospitality from the residents of the ghetto.

As the population grew, cemeteries became overcrowded for lack of available land. During six centuries, many of the old cemeteries were destroyed. Only one had been spared from total destruction. In fact, the Nazis had obliterated almost all the old Jewish cemeteries throughout Europe, so this one is most rare.

In my stroll through the maze of streets, I came upon a small rusty gate—the entrance to the old cemetery. The fifteen thousand occupants had been interred here over a period of three centuries. Ground was so scarce that the problem had been solved by placing one coffin above the other until the earth refused to receive more. The cemetery had been closed in 1787.

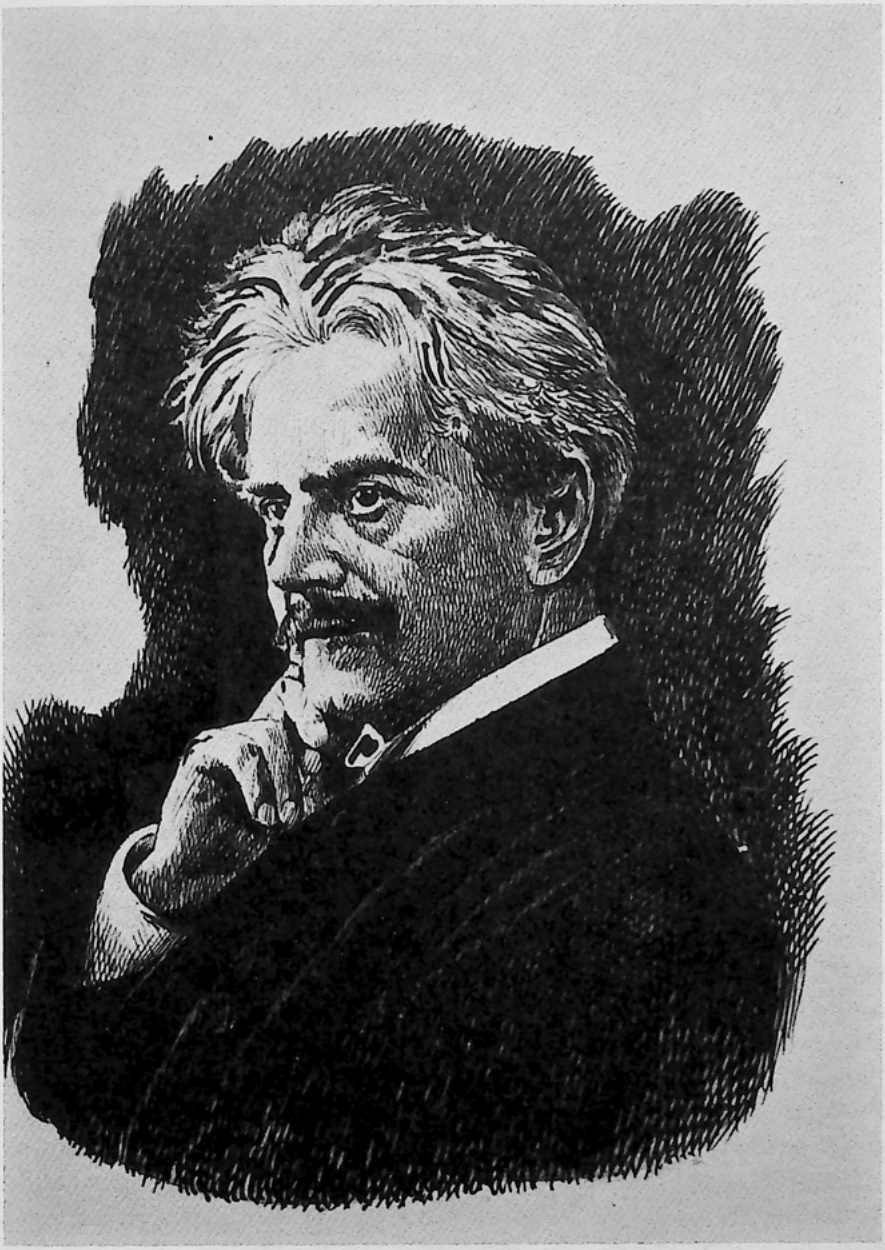
Peeking through the gate, the dense growth of shrubs and trees and damp moldy air, in awed silence, I was astonished by the forest of gravestones in view. These were crowding out each other in a profusion of positions and heights, and at crazy angles as if fighting for space and

David Popper (1843-1913). ". . . A richly decorated monument spoke of the deeds of an important man."

light. They were in many shapes—long, short, square, round, pointed, some modest and some stately. Many were decorated with carvings of grapes, vines, leaves or flowers, in stone, and framed in graceful columns. One little stone caught my eye, for it seemed suddenly so insignificant. But after longer observation and focusing my attention on it, the true importance of this small piece became evident. It told the tragedy and emotional state of its maker—not in words, but in the bold strokes of hammer and chisel on the stone hit by the exploding forces of anger and defiance: a gravestone for a child.

Nearby, a richly decorated monument spoke of the deeds of an important man. The centuries had erased any contours of the graves, and the stones fraternized in the confused democracy of the cemetery. Here, all were liberated of any distinction.

A faint breeze brushed my face. It felt like a gentle stroke of a gentle hand. I thought of David Popper . . .



"Popper possessed a charisma, felt by his audiences in the concert halls and also by those who came in contact with him in his social life."

Chapter II

Early Years

David Popper at 25 (1868).

The first time I heard the name of David Popper was on March 30, 1905. At the dinner table, our family was entertaining a friend who was an enthusiastic music lover and, in the animated conversation, David Popper's name was frequently repeated.

Though I was then too young to understand the discourse, the name remained in my memory. But the rest of the talk lay dormant for decades until only recently.

In searching for material related to Popper's life, I came upon an old program of a concert which was part of a festival that had been held in Budapest to celebrate the artist's fortieth anniversary as virtuoso and composer. The date was March 29, 1905. The realization that the dinner guest of long ago had been recounting this same memorable event suddenly brought to the surface the essence of that evening's conversation, as though—as they say—"it had happened yesterday."

I remembered that our guest was stimulated by the attention of his audience around the table as he spoke of the concert, and became more and more eloquent as he described the festivities. He told us that the concert was held in the great hall of the "Vigadó," where he had heard all the musical celebrities of the nineteenth century, from Liszt and Berlioz, on. He spoke of the flower-decked stage which looked like a garden; of the

laurel wreaths, and colorful silk ribbons inscribed with words of homage; of Popper's entrance on the platform, preceded by a group of young girls casting flower petals at his feet; and the standing ovation which he received in greeting from the audience, where were represented all the main strata in the country—financial, industrial, political, cultural—and many music lovers, musicians, and friends, both rich and poor. He spoke ecstatically of the beauty of Popper's playing and of the public's demonstration of their admiration and affection.

First on the program was the Beethoven *Sonata for Pianoforte and Violoncello in D major, Op. 102, No. 2,* with Madame Mihály Adler and Popper. There followed a group of short cello pieces by Tartini, Corelli, and Boccherini, and the fourth "Gavotte in Olden Style" by Popper. The third offering on the program was a performance of Popper's *String Quartet,* played by the Hubay-Popper Quartet, which included Professors Kemény and Szerémy. From there on Popper played his own works: "Nocturne No. 3," "Humoresque," "Lullaby," "Spinning Song," and "Hungarian Rhapsody."[1]

Popper was now sixty-two years old. It had been a long, arduous journey from the days when he began his career.

The celebration and all the honors, the gala concert, the excitement and the nostalgia of the day and evening must have sent many thoughts through David Popper's mind, on his way home that night.

The day had started in the concert hall of the Royal Academy of Music, where delegations from various musical, educational, and cultural institutions—including the Opera, the Philharmonic Orchestra, and the University—paid their respects. Gifts were presented, and there were many speeches of praise and appreciation. The participating persons and groups acted under the technical direction of the banker Josef Lukács, a devoted friend of Popper.

The Director of the Academy—a friend of Liszt and of Wagner—speaking in laudatory and glowing terms, presented a gift in the name of the faculty. The ladies of the organizing committee, led by Countess Mária Czebrian (Madame Jenö Hubay), announced a scholarship of 10,000 crowns, to be named after Popper. From another music school, the National Conservatory, emissaries handed him a silver laurel wreath. Additional music schools, from within the capital and from some provincial cities, came to take part in the celebration.

Tributes in the form of memorial gifts were presented to Popper by groups of friends. One was a handsome silver tray, with his profile embossed in the center. Also, he was honored with a large bronze plaque of himself in profile, holding the cello; smaller plaques of the same image were issued to friends who had been responsible in organizing the affair.

A few years before, in 1899, Popper had been decorated by the Emperor who distinguished him with the Order of Franz Joseph. The gala festivities at the fortieth anniversary celebration were opened by a member of the cabinet, representing the Ministry of Education and Culture. In his speech he praised Popper as artist and educator, and expressed the hope that his genius would serve for a long time for the benefit of young people.

As a fitting finale to the ceremonies, there came a group of children, led by the young son of Jenö Hubay, to offer good wishes.

The concert of the evening—both physically and emotionally enervating for Popper—was followed by a grand banquet at which were offered still more speeches and tributes.

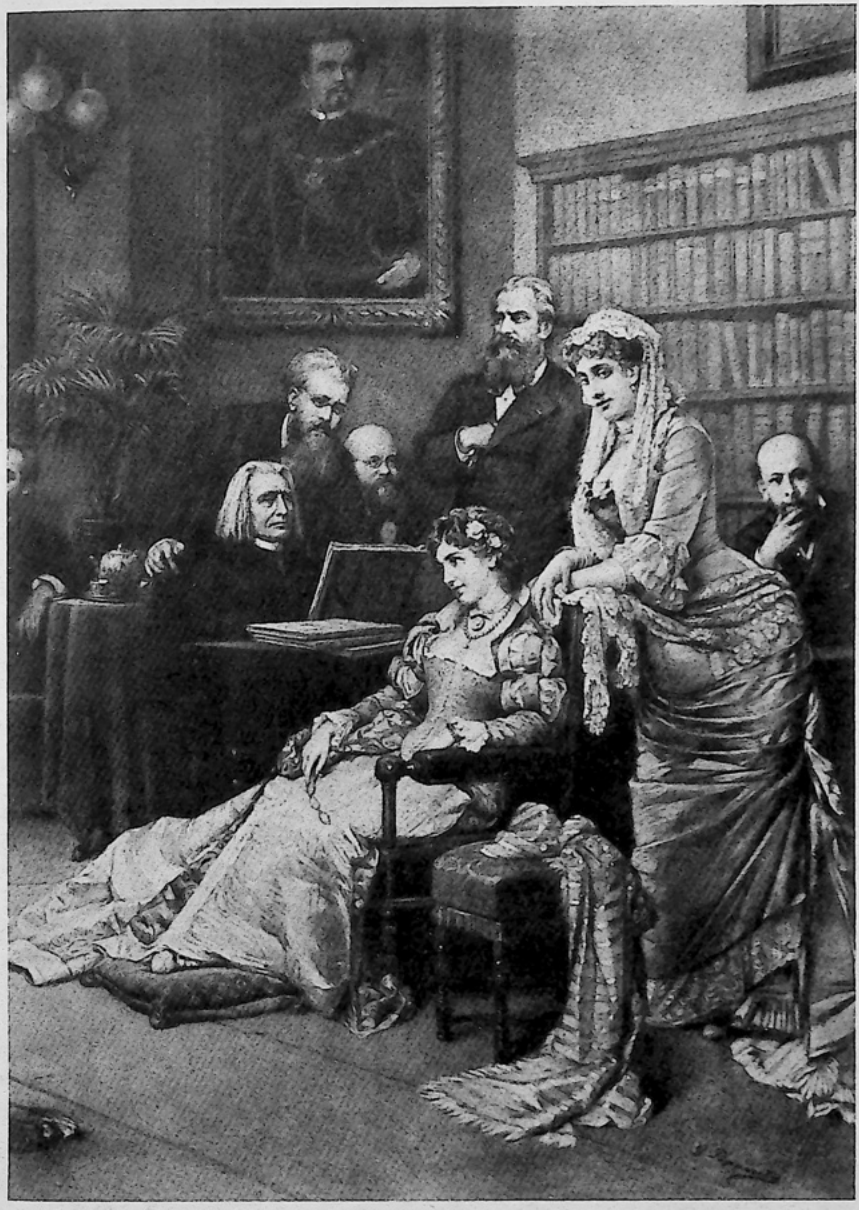
Through the weary mind, with the events of the day a blur from tiredness, floated the thoughts and images—conceivably back to the dream-like beginnings of his remote and shrouded childhood.

Perhaps he recalled his earliest home—a small flat where he and his family lived. There were at that time four children: two sisters, one brother, and himself. His father, Angelus Popper, the Cantor, had been twenty-four years old when he married Esther Kisch, the daughter of David Kisch, a merchant. In those times the dowry was an essential factor in securing a betrothal. Esther was two years older than Angelus, no doubt ready for marriage, and very probably able to provide a respectable dowry. She gladly accepted the arrangement—or offer—to be the Cantor's wife, in 1836.

The office of Cantor was enhanced with dignity and prestige by tradition. But in an eastern European ghetto we can presume that it was poorly paid. Thrift was very carefully observed in the household. David could still visualize his mother in the early morning light of market day, shopping basket on arm, hurrying out to find the bargains before they were gone. Their marriage lasted fifty-five years. During the first fourteen years, seven children were born. Only four—two sons and two daughters—survived childhood. The children were born at intervals of two or three years—a heavy burden, even if the economics had been more favorable. The first was Jinrisha, in 1837. There followed Leopold in 1839, in 1840 Julie, in 1843 David, in 1846 William, in 1848 Frederika, and Siegfried in 1851.

David vividly recalled his first musical experiences. The vocalizing of his father filled the air of the flat with his vibrant, strong voice. David would listen to the intensely expressive chants of deep human yearning and sentiment, and Biblical psalms, which flowed from his throat—reaching even into the neighbor's flat.

The Jews of Prague actively participated in German cultural life and



Franz Liszt, one of "the musical celebrities of the nineteenth century," was instrumental in forwarding Popper's teaching career.

admired German poetic literature and music. In the dimly lit room of the Popper home there were frequent gatherings of family and friends around the piano. David could recollect hearing the singing of beautiful songs at such times, and his enjoyment in the songs of Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn, and the great lyrics from poems of Goethe, Heine, Lenau, Schiller and Rückert, and the works of many other composers and poets. Sometimes favorite airs from operas were part of the fare. It was in such homely sessions of music making that the young David first realized that the poetic words were illuminated by the magic of the music. The impact of this was clearly remembered by him and always retained.

His own musical talent was first noticed when, as a three-year-old child, he imitated his father's singing, in perfect pitch. This phenomenon impressed and delighted his parents and the circle of friends. When he later made up little marching tunes, singing into a toy trumpet which he held to his mouth and strutting vigorously around the table, the family hopefully expected that at a suitable age he should receive musical education. He was six years old when their wishes were first granted.

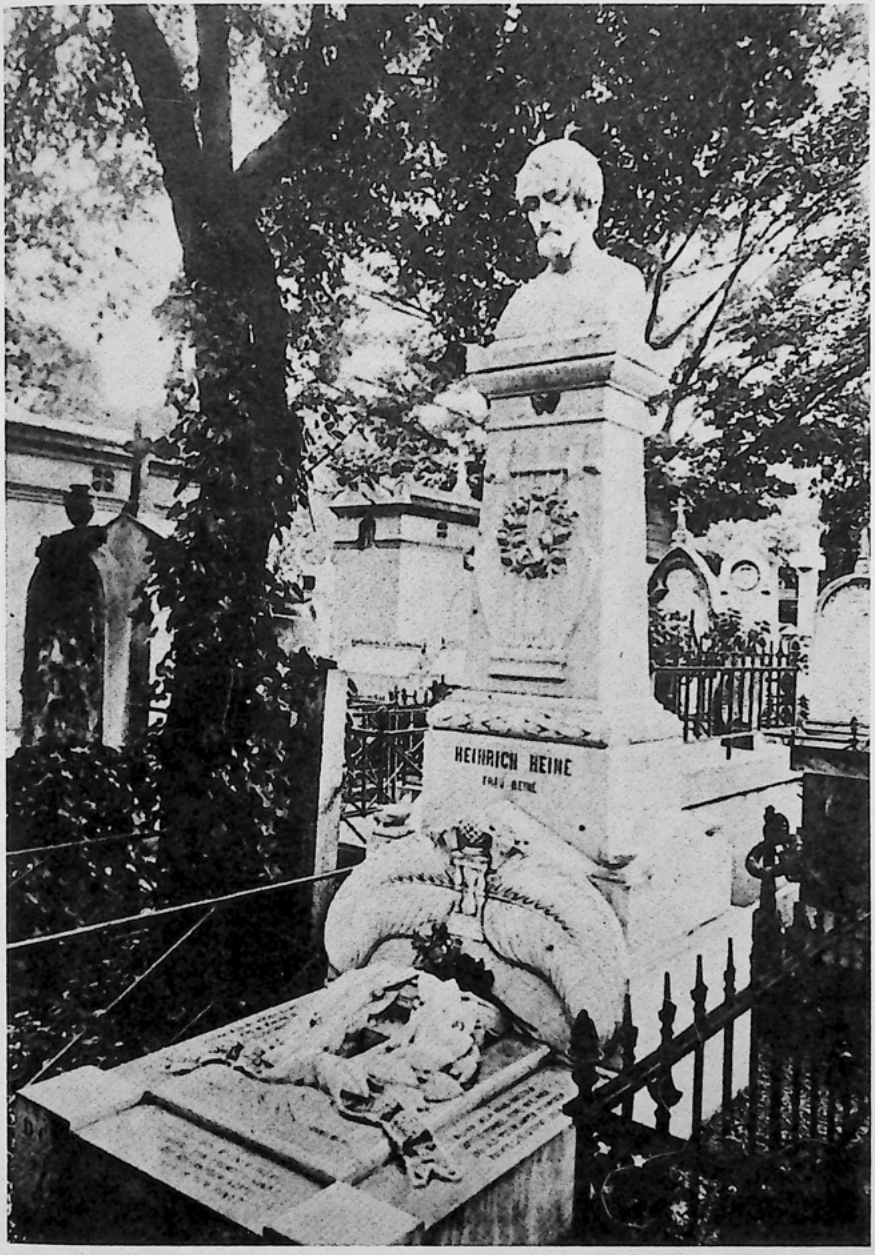
That night, as he reflected on his early years, thoughts of his parents must have come to him. We have no records or letters to indicate his relationship with his parents. But fortunately one document, in the language of music, which amply testifies to his warm and loving bond with them, exists. It is the cello piece with piano accompaniment, titled "Wie einst in schöner'n Tagen" ("Once upon More Beautiful Days") written in 1892, after the death of his father and mother—in 1891 and 1892 respectively.

The nostalgic mood of the music, which is simple in form and gentle in melody, exposes intimate sentiments. No words or letters could reveal more convincingly his love and affection.

The little piece was very popular for a long time after its publication in 1892. It has been told that when the Russian cellist Alexander Wierzbilowicz played it (it was his "inevitable" encore) his great tone poured out in heart-breaking sound. But Popper's own rendition evoked a gentle smile through the tears. His dedication was "To the Memory of my Unforgettable Parents.

By improvising on the piano at the age of five David demonstrated his very striking musical talent. Thereupon, it was somewhat of a surprise to relatives and friends when he began taking violin lessons a year later. An interested acquaintance offered the lessons gratis.

This was one chief reason for the choice of violin. Why else was it selected? The violin was easily available and less expensive than some other instruments. If played with adequate skill, it would soon open up



Tomb of Heinrich Heine. At an early age David Popper enjoyed the great lyrics from the poems of Heine in addition to other composers of German poetic literature, and music.

possibilities for earning a living. There were many opportunities for violinists to gain employment in state and municipal orchestras throughout Europe, and there were also frequent openings in the private "bands" of Dukes, Princes, and Kings. These jobs were often taken as stepping stones to better paying opera houses and orchestras. It is not likely that the parents expected the boy to become a virtuoso who would take the European capitals by storm.

Many famous cellists began their training on the violin before taking up the cello. Among these were Servais, Merk, Menter, Becker and Casals, just to mention a few.

While studying the violin, David's attachment for the piano never left him. The marvelous response from this instrument ready to produce sonorous sounds at the simple striking of the keys, was a luscious experience to his ears. When he felt like playing for the sheer joy of it—either improvising or recalling music he had heard—melody and harmony were all at his instant bidding.

Popper spoke of his "sporadic" violin lessons, and said that he was most happy when he could improvise on the piano. Nevertheless, the violin lessons continued until his twelfth birthday. Meanwhile, during those passing years his technique on the piano improved to such a degree that he was able to read at sight or play from memory, parts of operas he had previously heard.

The family decided that he needed better and more well-rounded musical education than he had been receiving from his violin teacher. It was planned that he should apply for admission at the Prague Conservatory.[2]

[1]*Neues Pester Journal* (Budapest), March 29-30, 1905.
[2]As told by Popper to his niece, Caroline Brandeis.

On the facing page: Program featuring Popper's Requiem *(Opus 66) in memory of Daniel Rahter, circa 1892. The same year Popper's "Wie einst in schoner'n Tagen," dedicated to his parents, was published.*

Hangversenybérlet VI. szám.

Budapest, szerdán, 1892. február 10-én esti 7½ órakor

a magy. k. operaház zenekarából alakult filharmoniai társulat

POPPER DÁVID

úr, országos magyar kir. zeneakademiai tanár, gordonkaművész és

NEY DÁVID

úr, a magyar kir. operaház tagja szíves közreműködésével

ERKEL SÁNDOR

karnagy vezénylete alatt

FILHARMONIAI HANGVERSENYT

rendez a fővárosi vigadó nagy termében.

MŰSOR:

1. *Mendelssohn.* »Symphonia« 3. szám (A-moll).
   a) Andante con moto — Allegro un poco agitato — Andante come primo. b) Vivace non troppo. c) Adagio. d) Allegro vivacissimo — Allegro maestoso assai.
2. *Popper.* »Requiem aeternam.« 3 magángordonkára és zenekarra. *Kézirat, első előadás.* Előadják: *Popper D., Bürger Zs.* és *Grützmacher Fr.* urak.
3. *Mendelssohn.* Magándal »Paulus«-ból. (Óh légy kegyelmes nekem nagy Isten.) Énekli *Ney Dávid* úr.
4. *Volkmann.* »III. Serenade« vonós-zenekarra (D-moll). A sologordonkarészt előadja *Popper Dávid* úr.
5. *Liszt.* »Les Préludes«. Symphoniai költemény.

Előadás alatt az ajtók zárva maradnak.

Jegyek kaphatók: Rózsavölgyi és Társa

cs. és kir. udvari zeneműkereskedésében (Kristóf-tér 3. sz.), valamint a hangverseny napján az esteli pénztárnál.

ORSZ. KÖNYV-TÁR

Chapter III

"The City of My Fathers"

In 1855 Johann Friedrich Kittl was Director of the Prague Conservatory when David Popper auditioned for admission.

The Conservatory of Prague was founded in 1811, thirty-five years before the Leipzig Conservatory was established. This distinction of being older than the famous school in Germany conferred a degree of venerability to its sister organization in Prague.

David had just passed his twelfth year, and as the minimum age to apply as a student was ten, he was eligible. The prospective student must have finished the fourth year's class of the public school, and show evidence of good scholarship. This he had already accomplished to his credit. David's father realized that, should his son be accepted, he would need to continue at the Conservatory for six years. At the end of that time his education should prove valuable for pursuing professional employment with confidence, and with good financial compensation as well. He would have, by then, a finished musical education on the violin and in all the related subjects such as theory and composition. The school also offered the student courses in French, esthetics, literature, "versification and prosody."

Carrying his violin, David entered the dark cool lobby of the Conservatory building in the University Complex. He began to climb the wide stone steps, up and up. The climb quickened his pulse. The surroundings filled him with awe. He was on the threshold of a new life. But his

mind was chiefly concerned with the immediate test of his entrance examination, to which he would submit in a few minutes.

The experience of his audition for admission to the Conservatory, as he later told me, never faded from his memory. When it eventually became his responsibility, and he presided benignly at the annual auditions of the Royal Academy of Music, in Budapest, he would recall the eventful moments of his own youthful trial, his concern and discomfort, and the elation of success.

In 1855 the examining committee was headed by Johann Friedrich Kittl (1809-1868), the Director of the Conservatory. He was credited for initiating the addition of academic studies to the usual music curriculum.

During the proceedings of the audition, the members of the board quickly recognized the boy's extraordinary musical gifts. He demonstrated these by playing on the violin and the piano, and by improvising, and he impressed them with his absolute pitch, naming tones as fast as they were given to him, one after the other and in complicated chords as well.

Thereupon, he was accepted, for special studies, with one stipulation: they requested that he take up the violoncello instead of continuing on the violin.

Kittl's objective was to train well educated orchestra musicians for the National Theatre, the Opera, and the Philharmonic Orchestra. There was a shortage of cellists, and a sufficient flow of violinists.

David was assigned to the class of George Goltermann (1827-1876), a talented cellist and teacher, thirty years old, who had begun his tenure at the Conservatory four years before.

Goltermann had been the pupil of Kummer in Dresden, and of Menter in Munich, and was thus equipped with a background of Germany's best representatives of the modern violoncello schools.

To carry the many subjects satisfactorily made great demands on the young boy. As at most state controlled institutions in Europe, the students were expected to yield to total discipline, and show progress throughout the years. He spent most of the day at school, six days a week, on subjects which included theory, composition, orchestra and chamber music, in addition to the academic courses of "general education" and the study of the violoncello.

Popper's loyalty to Goltermann was often publicly stated. However, at the outset of his first term, he felt that Goltermann manifested a certain restraint toward him. Years later, he told his niece, Caroline Brandeis, who was a well-known Prague pianist, that in retrospect, he understood Goltermann's attitude. He evaluated this situation as one in which his teacher felt some reluctance to try to transform a violinist into a cellist,

MOZART

Above: Friedrich August Kummer (1797-1879) under whom George Goltermann had studied in Dresden. On the facing page: Joseph Menter (1808-1856), at the piano, under whom George Goltermann had studied in Munich. Henri Vieuxtemps is third from the left and Heinrich Ernst is seated left front.

and was not yet confident that Popper would do him justice. These feelings gradually disappeared.

The above was disclosed by Madame Brandeis to a young Prague school-boy of fourteen, Fred Boch, who was preparing a speech on Popper, which he delivered in 1914. In addition, she told him the following charming episode, which had climaxed the relationship and endeared teacher and pupil to each other for a lifetime of friendship:

Goltermann, who was the solo cellist at the Opera, was indisposed, and asked Popper—then fifteen years old—to substitute for him that evening at the Opera. The young student was not completely surprised, as he was frequently called either to substitute for an absent member, or to take a place in an augmented orchestra that required a larger cello section. But he had always played on the last stand, or beyond—not at first, solo desk.

The opera was Rossini's *William Tell.* The familiar overture begins with a famous cello solo, entering all alone on an E minor arpeggio. The attention of the glittering audience was captured immediately, and all listened in hushed silence. Colleagues in the orchestra exchanged well-wishing glances. The young boy filled the house with his luscious sweet tone, and projected the lyric melody like a veteran soloist, as the rest of the cellos joined in accompaniment. The fervor of his tone gradually receded, resolving on a high harmonic E, long sustained, and decreasing to pianissimo.

Such a burst of applause interrupted the continuity of the overture that the onrushing storm, which was about to follow the cello solo in the score, was erased by its intensity. The reception was so enthusiastic that the conductor suspended the overture, and motioned to David to rise and acknowledge the acclaim with a bow.

The news of the ovation for the young cellist reverberated in the press next morning, and was also spread by word of mouth by those who had witnessed the occasion. When Goltermann met Popper the following day he put his arm around his shoulder, and said in absolute earnestness, "Popper, you would be a scoundrel if you call me 'Herr Professor' any more. From now on you call me the familiar 'Du.' "[1]

Years later, when his first Concerto, (Op. 8), was published (in 1871), he dedicated it to this "Beloved Teacher and Friend, George Goltermann." That year Popper was on the way to international fame. His extended concert tours were to begin a year later.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Prague Conservatory took place in the winter of 1861. Many notable musicians came to Prague from foreign lands. Among these were I. Moscheles,[2] a native of Prague and product of the Prague Conservatory, and F. David.[3] Both were distinguished faculty members of the Leipzig

Ignaz Moscheles (above) and Ferdinand David (below) attended the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Prague Conservatory and remarked about the striking resemblance of Popper to Paganini.

Conservatory, representing their organization. They had the occasion to hear Popper at concerts presented by the school, and both remarked the striking resemblance of Popper to Paganini,[4] whom they had heard, and had known personally.

In a letter of January, 1890, to the editor of the newspaper *Neues Pester Journal,* Popper writes of matters pertaining to a biographical sketch, and comments concerning this much-noticed likeness: "When I began my public career, everywhere people discovered in my physical appearance a coincidental resemblance to Paganini: this fact was due mostly to my thinness, bordering on transparency, as well as to my raven, long black hair. This comparison did not hurt me in the least. Just the opposite. It earned me a little halo, which I did not really deserve, during my first independent concert efforts.

"Many famous musicians who had known Paganini and associated with him were astonished by the similarity of appearance between the young Bohemian knee fiddler and the Italian magician of the violin. The more intense the desire of the people to recapture what had been lost, the more keen the search for a present substitute. They transferred the physical resemblance to my playing, and imagined that they heard the demonic sound of the great Italian.

"These were certainly very promising beginnings, but the resemblance would not last. The more I removed myself from Paganini's image, the more I decidedly became Popper. Yes, if any manager could have exploited my emaciated state, he could have transformed me into a transparent Paganini."[5]

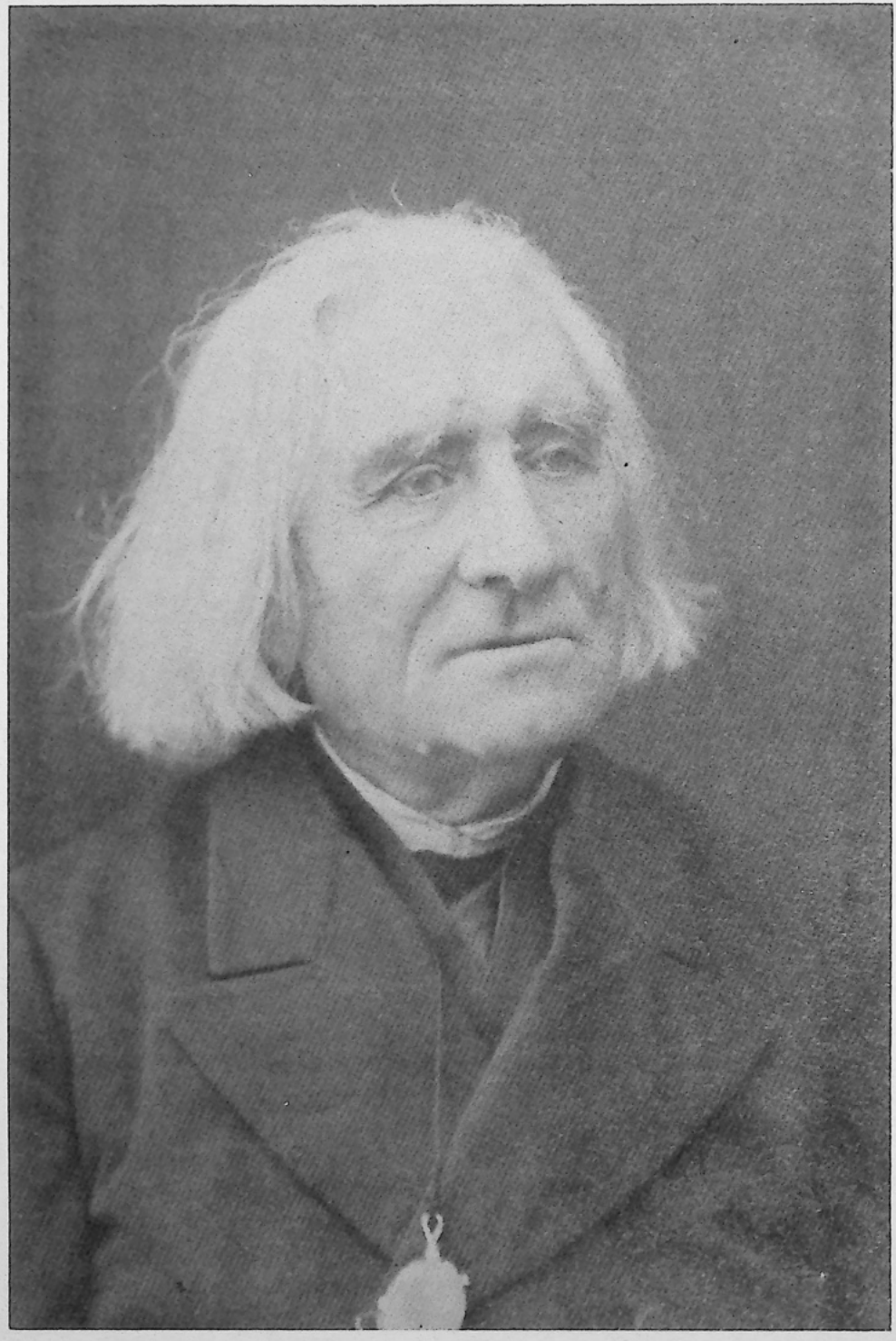
His graduation recital took place in June of 1861, on the stage of the National Theatre when he was eighteen years old. It had been in the same theatre, in the orchestra pit, that he had made his first sensation with the public, in the *William Tell* Overture.

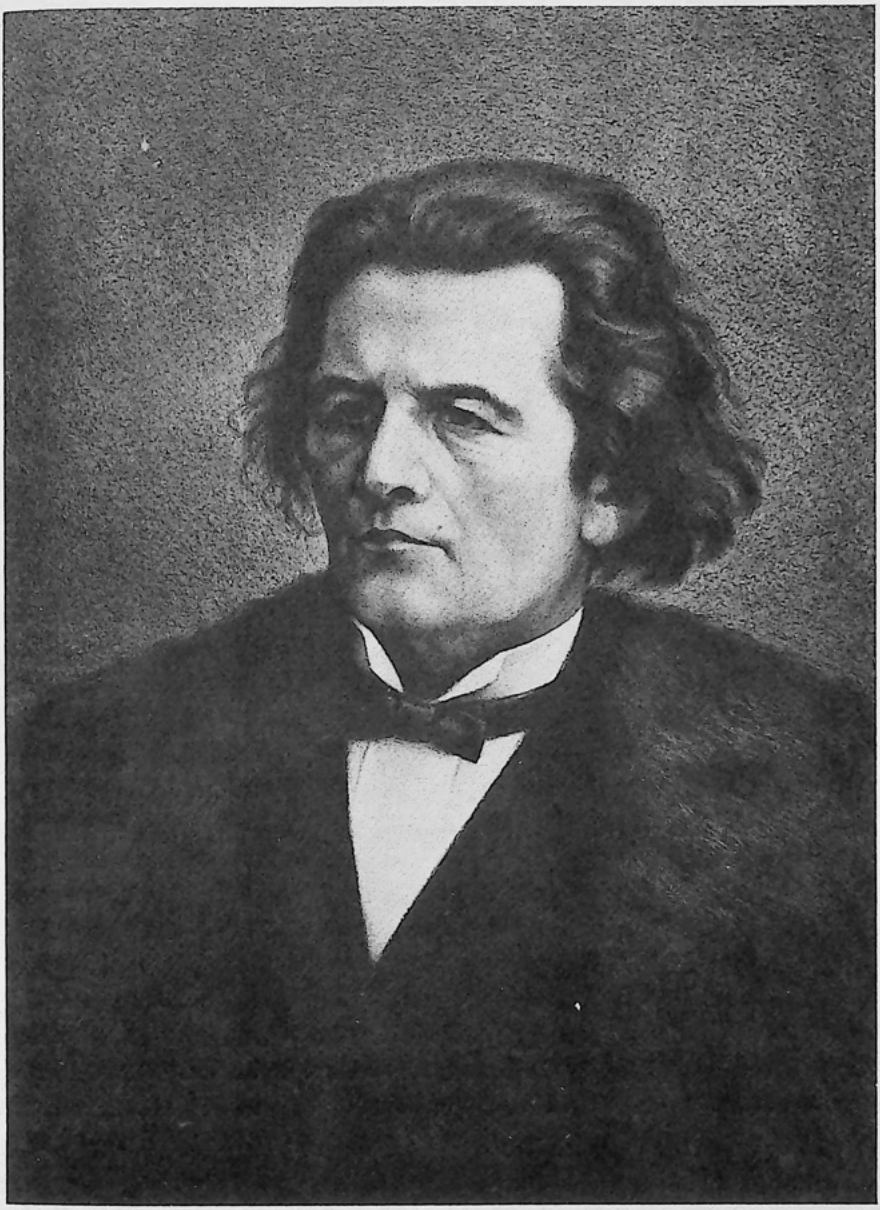
We had no record of his program for that concert, nor criticism from the press; there is no way to document its impact. But one could fairly draw some conclusion by considering his six years of serious study at the Conservatory, his acknowledged great talent, and by taking into account those artists who had been effective influences on him during his formative years.[6]

Every artist who toured Europe was heard in Prague. The city was linked by musical and cultural ties with Vienna, Leipzig, Dresden and Munich. Also, it lay on a convenient route to Russia, by which artists frequently made the long but profitable journey to Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other big, remote cities of the north.

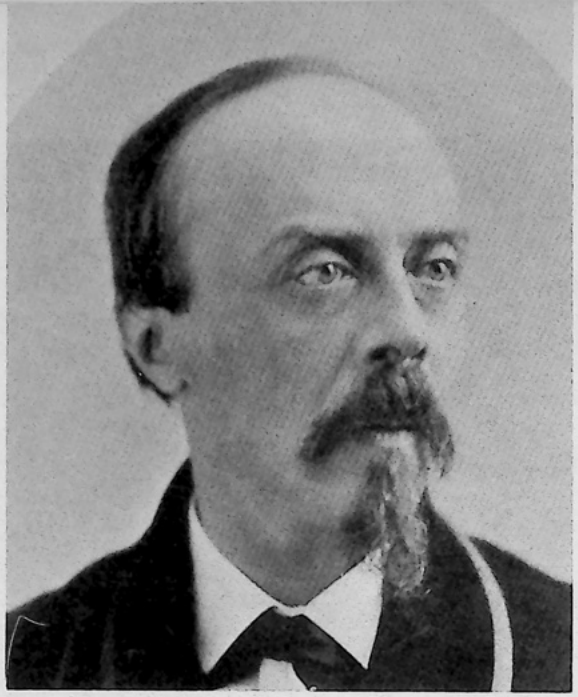
There was a period when I often accompanied him on walks. One day I asked him about important musical figures he had known and heard in

"Many famous musicians who had known Paganini and associated with him were astonished by the similarity of appearance between the young Bohemian knee fiddler [Popper] and the Italian magician of the violin."





Anton Rubinstein (above) and Franz Liszt (on the facing page) were among the important musical figures Popper had known and heard in his youth.



Hans von Bülow.

his youth. Names came back like a list from a musical "Who's Who" of the middle nineteenth century: he named the conductors Liszt, Wagner, Berlioz, and Bülow; pianists Brahms, Clara Schumann, Rubinstein, and again Liszt and Bülow; violinists Reményi, Joachim, Wieniawski, and Vieuxtemps, and many others. He remarked that Vieuxtemps was very fine ("famous" in German), and was one of his favorites. He added that he played with most of these artists.

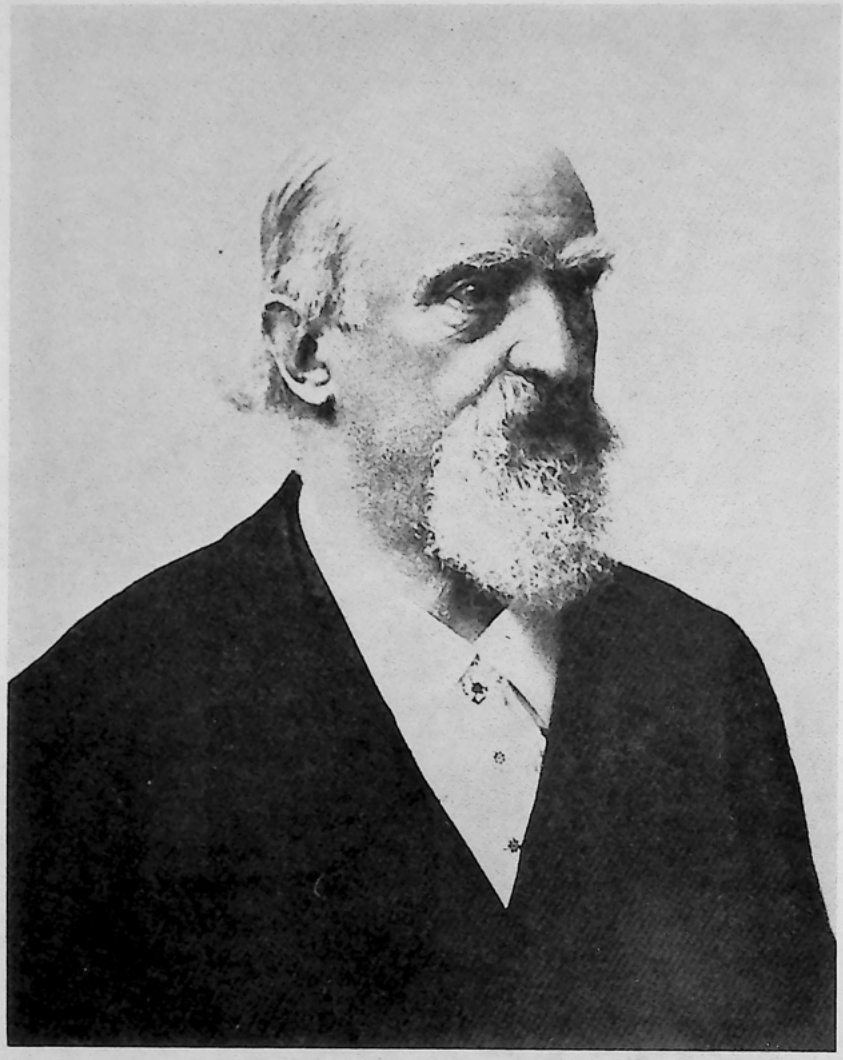
In a German musical encyclopedia it is stated that Popper's style was reminiscent of that of Vieuxtemps. When I was reading this, I was reminded of the conversation described above.

The apparent affinity to Vieuxtemps could have resulted from Popper's already inherent manner of playing, described by critics in the same terms they applied to Vieuxtemps: "Noble, graceful, elegant . . . controlled passion and very smooth playing."[7]

Vieuxtemps was recognized as the best virtuoso-composer for his instrument. In his criticism of Vieuxtemps in 1865 Hanslick judged that Vieuxtemps was the best violinist and the best composer of all the violinist composers of the day. In the same relationship, and to the same degree, the dual skills of performer and composer, for the cello, can be attributed to Popper.

Undoubtedly the identical qualities would have blossomed in Popper, had he never heard Vieuxtemps. But whether or not he was aware of holding up Vieuxtemps as a model, his talent and his own development were subtly enriched by emulating the great Belgian violinist.

Eduard Remenyi (above) and Hans von Bülow (on the facing page) were among the nineteenth century musicians who impressed David Popper in his youth.



Eduard Hanslick's 1865 criticism judged Vieuxtemps the best virtuoso-composer for the violin. The dual skills of performer and composer for the cello may be attributed to Popper.

After his recital, it was time to look afield, probably beyond the borders, to seek employment and security. Vienna was a testing ground for many aspiring musicians. The memories of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert still hovered over the city like a magic force. David and his friend, the violinist named Wien, were very much exposed to the pull and fascination of Vienna. They decided that a pilgrimage to the source of this mystical attraction would enrich their souls and, at the same time, try their talent in a fresh and very different environment. Their image of themselves was conditioned by the benign approval of their teachers, and the heady admiration of relatives and friends. This conception was to receive a slight jolt.

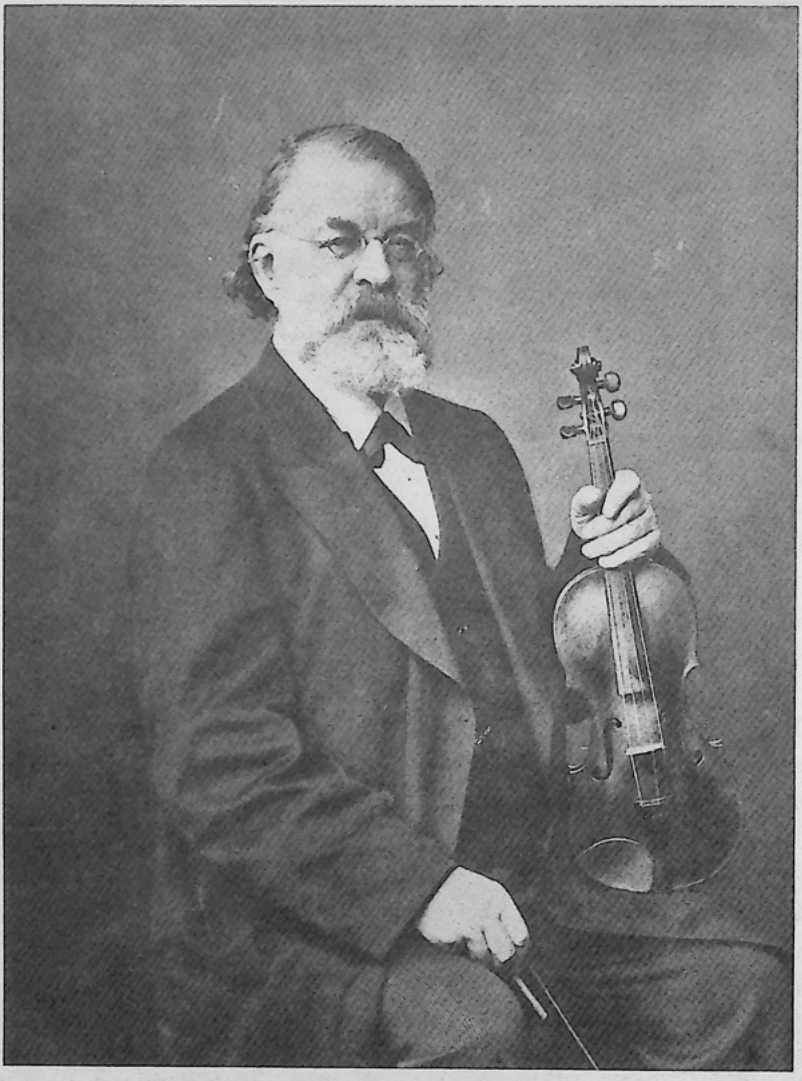
Soon after their graduation, a friend offered them an opportunity to perform a joint recital in one of the small concert halls of that city. The offer was accepted with optimistic enthusiasm—a prerogative of their youth, having as yet had no real disappointments. They took off for Vienna late that summer.

It so happened that the Vienna correspondent to the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*[8] (Leipzig), founded by Schumann in 1834, heard the Popper-Wien concert. Its statement was read all over Europe, as follows:

"Two recently graduated students of the Prague Conservatory, Herr David Popper, and Herr Wien, violinist, allowed themselves to be heard here. Both showed evidence that their public appearance occurred too soon."

These words certainly did not advance their chances to be placed on the world stage. In Vienna, the "Mecca" of the musical cities, the style of music criticism by Eduard Hanslick was supported by the objective, intellectual attitude of many German critics. The reaction of the young artists may have been a new and painful experience in facing reality; undoubtedly it proved beneficial to each of them. Popper's next steps were less bold, and the caution was eventually rewarded. Mr. Wien settled in Stuttgart a few years later, and there he joined with Popper's friend and colleague, the cellist Cabisius, in a string quartet which became a prominent organization. The group functioned for many years and was recognized throughout Germany as one of the important chamber music ensembles. On frequent concert visits to Vienna they were met with acclaim. In less than four years, Popper was to appear under Bülow's direction, playing Volkman's recently written *Cello Concerto* with the Philharmonic Orchestra in Berlin.

He would now need to leave his family, who had sheltered him during his student years, and to say goodbye to the school and to "the venerable city of my fathers, with its hundred towers." Indeed, the vista of Prague was a joy to behold. The picturesque grandeur of the old royal castle



Joseph Joachim, one of the greatest masters of the violin (1831-1907). The famous Joachim Quartet was organized in 1869; among his many accomplishments Joachim was unexcelled in his day as a player of chamber music. Popper had the good fortune to be exposed to Joachim's flawless art and faithful interpretation.

dominating the hill across the river had at first seemed remote and mysterious to his young eyes. But in time, as the sights became more familiar, his impression warmed. He used to recall his walk along the bank of the Vltava on the way to school, passing by many beautiful Baroque and Renaissance palaces, built many years ago. The buildings were bathed in very early morning light, and the vision would stir in him deep poetic responses. He said that he was well compensated for rising so early each morning.

There was some talk of his joining the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig. It was about this time that Davidoff was prepared to leave his posts in the Leipzig Orchestra and Conservatory, and move to St. Petersburg. There may possibly have been some discussion about offering Popper the first chair. It was rumored that Bülow had had a hand in such recommendation.

Popper's niece, the pianist Caroline Brandeis of Prague, remembered that Popper had told her that he felt his youth and limited experience did not justify that he then assume the great responsibility of so important an orchestra. However, at almost the same time, and also through Bülow, an invitation came for him to take the position as second cellist in the Löwenberg Court Orchestra, in Lower Silesia. The patron of the orchestra was Prince Constantine Hohenzollern-Hechingen.

When Popper accepted this offer he was eighteen years old. He left the ". . . city . . .with its hundred towers"; when later he would return, it would be for solo and chamber music concerts, and to give his talent in benefit performances in loyal service to his native city.

[1]Permission to use the familiar, rather than the formal, address was a symbol of favor and closeness.

[2]Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), composer and pianist, close acquaintance of Beethoven.

[3]Ferdinand David (1816-1873), famous violinist and teacher.

[4]Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840).

[5]Of course, the analogy by Moscheles and David referred to the young Paganini. Heinrich Heine, the famous German poet, who wrote music criticism from Paris for the German papers, described his impressions of the aging Paganini in quite a different light: ". . . the odd sickly wornout man . . . fleshless, bloodless . . . the expression of contemptuous scorn in the eyes which shine like black jewels out of the bluish white . . ."

[6]Like all cellists until the late nineteenth century, Popper held the instrument in the same position as the viola da gamba had always been held, between the knees. This is shown in the picture "Popper after graduation."

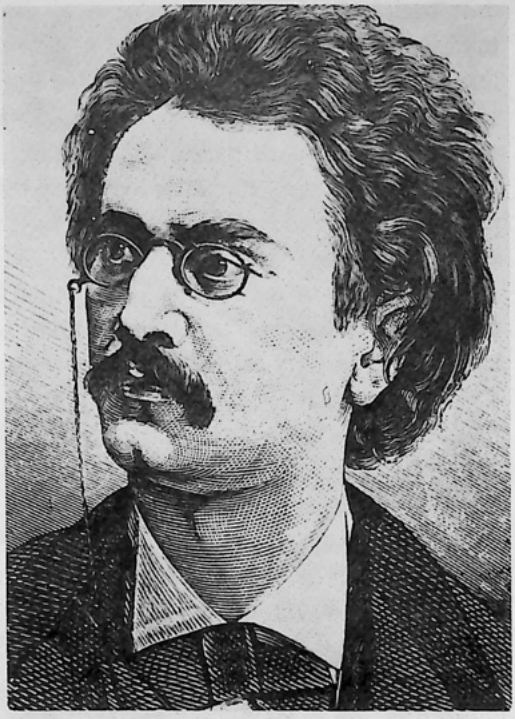
According to *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* F. Servais first inserted an endpin at the bottom of the cello, resting it on the floor for support, and gaining freedom to balance the body and ease for the left hand to reach high positions. In his later years Servais became so fat that he could not hold the cello in the gamba manner.

[7]Friedrich Blum, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1941).

[8]Henceforth indicated in footnotes as: *NZfM* (Leipzig).

Chapter IV

Löwenberg



Popper's association with the Löwenberg Court Orchestra was followed by his career as a traveling concert artist.

When young Popper took leave from Prague, it was a momentous day for him and for his family, in late summer, 1861. A biographer need not indulge in fictional fancy to visualize his departure at the railroad station, bidding farewell to friends and family. Traveling to far places in a different country has always been viewed with excitement, and for parents who stay behind, with some anxiety and concern.

During the long ride from Prague to Löwenberg[1] he thought of his past and future, and tried to sort out the many emotions he had encountered during the past days in preparation for his journey.

We can be sure that he was well aware of the court orchestra's role, and its prominence in the musical scene of Germany. Max Seifritz (1827-1885), the highly respected conductor, had won the commendation of such musical figures as Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, and Bülow, and much favorable notice in the press.

When he finally arrived at Greifenberg in Lower Silesia, the railroad station nearest to Löwenberg, a carriage from the orchestra was waiting for him. The ride to the old town must have been a mixed blessing: romantic rural scenery on the slopes of the Riesenberg and invigorating air after the long sooty train ride, but with disturbances in his stomach from the rocking of the carriage on the road and the uncertainties ahead.

What could have occupied his mind during those fourteen miles?

Naturally, he was concerned about how he would adjust to the new life, now that he was no longer a student nor under the protecting eyes of his parents. And how would he rate with his conductor?

While he settled down in his new quarters he had time to look around before rehearsals began, and to learn some facts about the town where he expected to stay for several years. Gradually, from his colleagues, he gathered information about the orchestra, its past history, its present state of affairs, and its relationship to the Prince.

The musical patronage of the Hohenzollern family had begun while the court was seated in Hechingen, in southwestern Germany, and goes back several centuries. Except for a period of economic distress following the Napoleonic wars, an orchestra had been maintained continuously by the court.

In 1826 the then hereditary Prince F.W. Constantine took charge of the orchestra and its destiny. He was highly competent because his musical education had extended beyond the training usually given to the privileged members of the ruling aristocracy. His taste in music was extraordinarily advanced, and he gave active support to those "avant garde" composers of the early nineteenth century who, in their youth, were seeking recognition—among them: Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner.

The Prince, who had become the ruler of the state upon his father's death in 1838, had relinquished his sovereignty to Prussia as part of the trend toward a consolidated Germany. He temporarily retired to his old castle in Holstein in Lower Silesia, in the romantic mountains of Riesenberg. A new palace was built in the nearby town of Löwenberg, which included a concert hall designed according to the Prince's specifications.

Before the move to Löwenberg, the orchestra had consisted of four violins, two violas, one violoncello, two doublebasses, one flute, one oboe, two clarinets, one bassoon, two horns, two trumpets and percussion. This was a modest group of instrumentalists, made adequate for performing larger works by occasional augmentation with "borrowed" musicians.

In 1843 Berlioz had no trouble performing his large orchestra pieces with the Hechingen orchestra. The conductor was Täglichsbeck, renowned as a violin virtuoso and composer of operas and symphonies. Other notable visiting composers were Spohr, Molique, Vieuxtemps, and especially Liszt, whose friendship for the Prince was very close.

After the move to Löwenberg the orchestra was enlarged, and in 1857 Täglichsbeck was succeeded in his post by his pupil Max Seifritz, who took charge of the orchestra with such vigor and energy that in a short

time it became reputed as one of the three best orchestras in Germany—the other two being the Weimar Court Orchestra under the direction of Liszt, and the Sonderhausen Orchestra conducted by Eduard Stein.

We know of a few very fine cellists who held posts in the orchestra. Joseph Menter, who served at Hechingen from 1829-33, was the best-known of Popper's predecessors. He moved from there to the Bavarian court in Munich and became a prominent teacher. His daughter, Sophie Menter, was to become Popper's first wife, and George Goltermann, one of his many fine pupils, became Popper's teacher.

The outstanding cellist Theodore Oswald, who occupied the first cello chair when Popper arrived, was also a pupil of Menter. And Julius Cabisius, who joined the orchestra soon after, had been Popper's fellow-student under Goltermann. He eventually moved to Stuttgart, after the orchestra disbanded, and became known as a soloist and as director of the Stuttgart Theatre.

Popper soon realized that the quaint provincial town contained opportunities that would very deeply affect his musical and cultural development. Indeed, his nearly seven years' association with the Löwenberg Orchestra did bring fruitful benefits as he had instinctively anticipated. It was a stroke of good fortune for young Popper to get under the wings and influence of Seifritz.

Under his guidance the Löwenberg Court Orchestra had gradually increased in importance. In an article published in 1863, Bülow wrote of Seifritz:

"It is well-known that Seifritz deserves his fame as a musician. For years he heads one of the most outstanding organizations that functions in Germany. We also know that the court orchestra of the Prince Hohenzollern-Hechingen in Löwenberg, under his spirited leadership, gives twenty-six concerts annually, and performs the most significant works of every epoch, written for instrumental music, with distinction. It is fortunate that fate chose this many-sided artist, who possesses the highest musicianship for this profession."

But it was not only Bülow who expressed admiration for the Löwenberg Orchestra and its leader. In his memoirs, which he dedicated to Seifritz ". . . with warm esteem and gratitude . . ." Berlioz described his visit and concert there of April, 1863, and his regard for the orchestra was expressed in glowing words. From his descriptions we have an interesting report of his impressions. He says that the forty-five to fifty players were ". . .admirable, alert, and intelligent musicians. . .", and hails the conductor as ". . .a trainer of rare skill and thoroughness. . ."

Wilhelm Molique, drawn by Joseph Müller, was among the notable composers who visited the Löwenberg Orchestra.

Louis Spohr, celebrated German violinist, composer and conductor (1784-1859) performed with Paganini in Rome, and in 1816 Spohr's opera Faust *was performed in Prague. Spohr was among the important musicians who visited the Löwenberg Orchestra during Popper's association.*

The Löwenberg Court Orchestra was by no means over-worked. The confinement of a small town of about five thousand people provided for few distractions from the business of making music in the orchestra. Energies were not spread over other professional activities during the six-month season as was often the case among orchestra membership in urban centers, where teaching, church music, and special concerts added to the total load.

Popper was seated on the second chair, next to Theodore Oswald, the solo cellist of the orchestra. Oswald was an experienced musician who had held his position for many years with distinction. Because he had studied with Joseph Menter, as had Popper's former teacher George Goltermann, a quasi-kinship was created between the two, and developed into a warm, cordial relationship.

The orchestra concert season extended from the end of October to the end of April. Popper was paid the moderately comfortable salary of five hundred thalers. The other half of the year, the members of the orchestra made the best of various opportunities which might be available to them to enlarge the income guaranteed at Löwenberg. Engagements were sought in other regions, or in neighboring larger towns around Löwenberg. Popper concentrated on promoting his own future by cultivating his contacts for solo engagements.

During the season he was to participate in from twenty-four to thirty orchestra concerts, mostly under Seifritz. Some visiting composers appeared with the orchestra, often conducting and also performing as soloist (for examples: Liszt and Bülow). The program material was chosen from the classic and romantic periods, and special attention was also given to the modern German composers Liszt, Wagner, and Volkmann, and to the French Berlioz.

The total financial support came from the Prince's own purse and amounted to thirty thousand thalers for the season. In comparison to the budgets of other similar organizations, the Löwenberg Orchestra was generously supported. In fact, it was a unique situation in all Germany.

The orchestra had forty-five players. When the score demanded a larger body of musicians, Seifritz brought in the needed number from orchestras in nearby towns such as Görlitz, Bunzlav, and even from the distant Breslau.

Rehearsals were held in the concert hall of the palace, which was elegantly decorated. There were five hundred comfortable chairs, all occupied at each concert.

The functioning of the concert hall was described as follows:

"The Prince opens the doors of the Löwenberg concert hall to sincere friends of music; admission and a place in the hall are guaranteed to every

citizen of the town, and to all strangers as well. To receive a ticket one needs only to present himself at the court office, and register his name. However, every citizen is free to express his opinion: he may applaud if he wishes, recall for desired encores, etc., and has just as much right as if he had paid one thaler Entree."[2]

Busts of the Prince's favorite composers were displayed on pedestals—Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Gluck, Spontini, Spohr and Mendelssohn stood along the walls. As a special tribute and a gesture of admiration from the Prince, the wall at the back of the stage was adorned by a large handsome medallion of the profile of Liszt—giving him an honored place among the immortals.

To some degree the press questioned the smallness of the string section of the orchestra, but it came to be acknowledged that the fine acoustics of the hall, the virtuosity of the players and the disciplined control of dynamics by their conductor Seifritz compensated for any distortion in the balance of sound.

The intense interest of the players in their work was inspired by the stimulating and varied repertoire, and also by the frequent presence of the Prince, who seldom missed attending the rehearsals, with score in hand. He enjoyed sitting next to the tympanist and sometimes helping to count the drawn-out measures of rests.

The first season was well under way when, as was the custom, the celebration of the Prince's birthday on Feb. 15th provided a high point in the series of concerts. The program was especially chosen to please him, and included works from his favorite composers. Liszt was represented with his recent work the *Faust Symphony,* written a year earlier, and with his *A major Concerto,* performed by the popular pianist Hans von Bronsart. The *Coriolanus* Overture by Beethoven, *King Lear* Overture by Berlioz, and an aria from Weber's *Euryanthe* sung by a singer from the Dresden Opera house, completed the program. This would have been substantial fare even for any large music center. Moreover, the performance of the Faust Symphony, and of other choral works performed at Löwenberg, such as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and Schumann's "Der Rose Pilgerfahrt" was made possible because Seifritz had formed and trained a choral society which joined with the orchestra for such special productions. This was testimony to the taste and quality of the musical life in Löwenberg of which Popper was now a part.

At the end of the season Popper had the opportunity to be introduced at one of the intimate concerts of the Leipzig Conservatory, and thereby attain some publicity. This extremely musical city was the home of the prestigious Gewandhaus Orchestra and represented, in addition to Vienna, another goal for many aspiring young musicians. An appearance there was a very desirable step.

A critic from the *neue Zeitschrift für Musik* attended this concert, on May 9, 1862, and he reported:

"We heard Herr Popper, recently from Prague, and found him an extraordinary violoncellist. He played on an evening meeting at the Conservatory, and we also heard him privately, performing the Goltermann and Schumann Concertos. Popper draws a large full tone, and his performance shows an unusual combination of deep sentiment and mastery of the instrument; in the best sense he can be characterized as a modern artist."

This criticism, appearing in the international weekly periodical, must have given a feeling of confidence to the nineteen-year-old virtuoso.

His success was followed by a shock—the death of his colleague Oswald on the 29th of the same month. The eulogy describing Oswald's musical attributes, said he was "equally brilliant as soloist, chamber music player, and thoroughly experienced orchestra musician."

The need to uphold the standard of excellence bequeathed by Oswald, and the responsibilities as solo cellist, now fell on Popper's shoulders. He called upon Julius Cabisius, his friend with whom he had graduated as a fellow-student of Goltermann at the Prague Conservatory, to take the second chair in the Löwenberg Orchestra.

Popper's second season at Löwenberg would assume new dimensions.

[1]Now Lwowek Slaski, since Lower Silesia was annexed by Poland after World War I, 1918.

[2]Richard Pohl, "A Concert of the Löwenberg Orchestra," *NZfM* (Leipzig), May 1, 1863.

Chapter V

Solo Cellist

David Popper in Frankfurt (1875).

As solo cellist, Popper gained opportunities to perform major solo works with the orchestra, and to try his own compositions, then in manuscript, before the public. His new position also involved his participation in chamber music performances which were presented regularly, on or between the orchestral concerts. These programs were repeated in nearby cities, and a tenth annual series of chamber music concerts was soon to begin in Görlitz. Seifritz was the leader of the quartet; his brother, Emil Seifritz, played second violin, Hübschmann viola, and Popper replaced Oswald as cellist.

In December of 1862 the Prince gave him the title of Kammervirtuoso, a designation cherished by musicians everywhere. In appreciation, Popper dedicated to the Prince his new work. *Six Character Pieces* (Op. 3) which contained two numbers which would become among his most popular—"Arlequin" and "Papillon."

Popper's next appearance as soloist took place that same December in Breslau, at the invitation of Leopold Damrosch (1832-1885). Damrosch had founded the Philharmonic Society of which he was the conductor, and had organized a Chamber Music Series; he was an excellent musician, whose great reputation reached to New York. In 1871 he would be called to New York, where his influence would have lasting effect on the

musical life of that city. Later he became the founder of first, the Symphony Society and later, the Philharmonic Society.

Popper played George Goltermann's second *Cello Concerto* with Damrosch, and the correspondent reported the concert in glowing terms, as follow:

"We witnessed a young man of nineteen, full of enthusiasm for his instrument. Sometimes he draws out the tone from his cello with immense power, and sometimes with tender sweetness. The reception given to him was of roaring applause and many recalls, and in these I shared wholeheartedly. In addition to the concerto, Herr Popper played his own 'Phantasy,' based on the 'Lieder' by Prince Hohenzollern-Hechingen, and the charming, melodious character of this music was extraordinarily appreciated, especially by the ladies. We feel that the young artist, whom we consider already among the best of our time, has a great and promising future."[1]

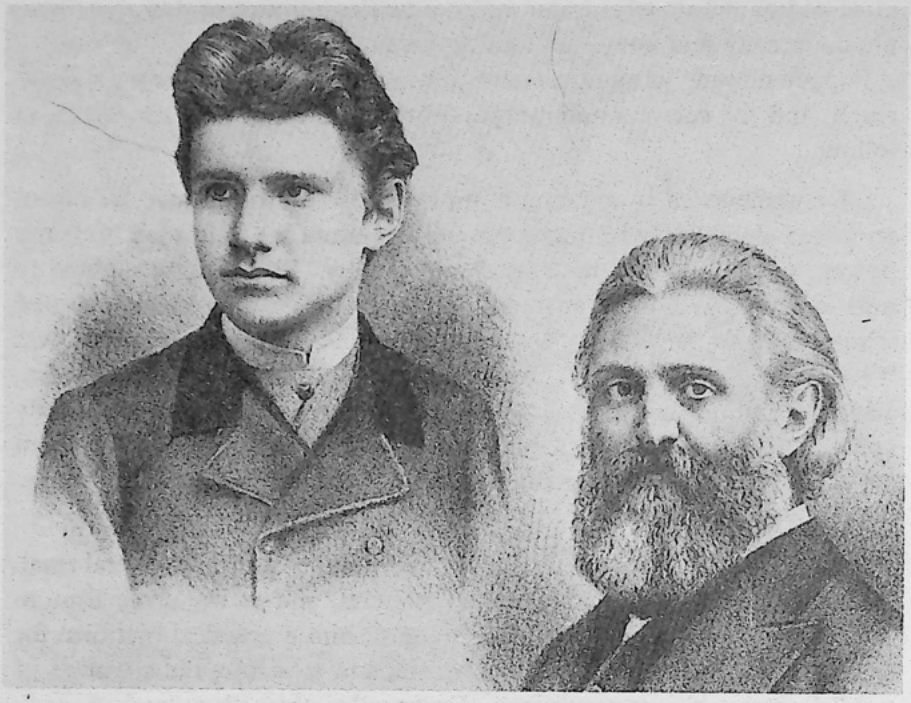
The winter of 1863 presented opportunities to perform in several small towns in Germany on subscription concerts, and at the same time to emerge as a composer. This exposure gave him a practical platform for testing public reaction to his own music, and to attract the attention of publishers to his compositions. Eventually, this plan worked well, because in a few years the clamor for his music began to come from cellists all over Europe, and the publishers did take notice. The bulk of his compositions between Op. 3 and Op. 24 were printed from 1865 to 1880, and most of these were performed from manuscript prior to publication: Opus Nos. 3, 10, 11, 14, 22, 23 were universally accepted successes before they were in print.

In contrast to the small town engagements which Popper filled that season, he played under the auspices of the "Musikverein Euterp" in Leipzig, on Feb. 27, 1863. The purpose of this organization was to recognize neglected but praiseworthy older works, and give support to the production of significant new music.

The program began with "older" works: *Genoveva Overture* by Schumann, an aria from *Iphigenia in Tauris,* by Gluck, sung by Frl. Emilie Wiegand, and Schubert's *C Major Symphony.* Liszt was represented by his full orchestra transcriptions of the piano parts to Schubert's two songs: "Der Doppelgänger" and "Die Junge Nonne." Popper appeared as virtuoso and composer, playing Goltermann's *Concerto* and, representing the "newest" work, his own two pieces: *Andante* and *Rondo.*

The critic gave generous space writing of the event, and one third of the column was about Popper:

"In Herr Popper we observed a still very youthful, but already



Dr. Leopold Damrosch and son. Leopold Damrosch (1832-1885), founder and conducter of the Philharmonic Society, invited Popper to make a solo appearance in Breslau, 1862.

remarkable outstanding virtuoso of the violoncello. Apart from his enormous technical finesse, which assures flawless technical performance, and accordingly, an always pure intonation, he proved himself an artist by his great soulful warmth in singing passages as well as his fiery youthful drive in lively movements. From all indications we can hope that, by such praiseworthy efforts toward excellence, it will soon happen that he is counted as the first in his profession.

"The Goltermann *Concerto* is a grateful work for the manifestation of virtuosity. Whether or not it has originality is a question, though it is still an excellent composition.

"In the *Andante* and *Rondo* (E minor) of Popper, several fresh and original thoughts appear—one for example: the bold and joyful main theme in the *Rondo*. Yet the young composer misses being consistent, making occasional unnecessary digressions. Furthermore, we missed a polyphonic development of the main theme. Increased charm and a more homogeneous character could have been conferred by the distribution of the thematic material in the various instruments of the accompaniment."[2]

The *Andante* and *Rondo* became the second and third movements of Popper's *E minor Concerto*—the most successful among the four concertos which Popper wrote. Prior to its publication in 1880, it was performed by many prominent cellists.

Apparently, in mentioning "soulful warmth in singing passages," the critic stimulated a complaint to the editor in the form of an article expressing dislike for Popper's use of the vibrato (which had previously been sparingly employed, but was in a process of evolution and being cultivated increasingly by cellists).[3]

The critic answered this article in March, and the objecting correspondent made further reply in the November issue. The critic's answer and the final objection are shown below:

"With regards to the violoncello virtuoso Mr. David Popper: the author of said article would have done better not to burden the excellent artist nor the 'nerves of the listeners' with the result of his own lack of pertinent understanding. The Leipzig musicians who were present at the concert—and they were assembled in great numbers and among them our best names—attest to Mr. Popper that none of the expressed criticism had any real foundation. His tone is excellent, and one could not discover any trace of the intolerable 'vibrating' of some virtuosos; the manner of presentation which he applied and which is necessary for the required warmth of the tone was only the shaking (or oscillating) vibrato movement as it is legitimately taught."[4]

". . . Next, objection is raised to our statement that Mr. David Popper had tried the nerves of his listeners by continuous vibrato and it is claimed that the vibrato of the gentleman had been the 'shaking (or oscillating) movement as it is legitimately taught.' Well, we will not insist on the term: we did not, thus, perceive a single tone from Mr. D. Popper to which—the tempo permitting—he did not apply his 'legitimately taught vibrato movement'; if the critic of the 'Neue Zeitschrift für Musik' found this to his liking it only proves that he no longer has any sense for a natural homogeneous tone and that his hearing organs have been infected by a sickness of taste which at the moment is indeed the fashion; perhaps he will even go a little further and try to apply a legitimately executed trill to each note of a vocal piece as had already happened."[5]

The town of Görlitz, located between Dresden and Löwenberg, was musically a companion to the latter. Not only did they assist by loaning personnel to Löwenberg when needed, but in reciprocation a group of players from the Löwenberg Orchestra would augment the Görlitz Orchestra for performing larger works. Usually, Seifritz would occupy a seat among the first violins, blending with the orchestra like any of the

members who served with him. In like manner, he often took over the concertmaster's seat when Löwenberg was having a visiting conductor. The brotherhood of musicians was beautifully exemplified by this cooperation of Seifritz for art's sake, in which his status was in no way diminished.

The string quartet from Löwenberg presented a concert in Görlitz in February of 1863. Popper had at some previous time appeared there as soloist with the Görlitz orchestra, so he was no stranger when he played the first concert there as a member of the quartet. The critical reaction was highly favorable:

". . . Popper's former performance here excellently demonstrated the great reputation he has attained. The rare gift of this young man is combined with equally cultivated artistic performance skills. His outstanding qualities are overpowering spirit and natural emotion, without any trace of insipid sentimentality, combined with the forceful full tone which Popper understands how to bring forth from his instrument . . ."[6]

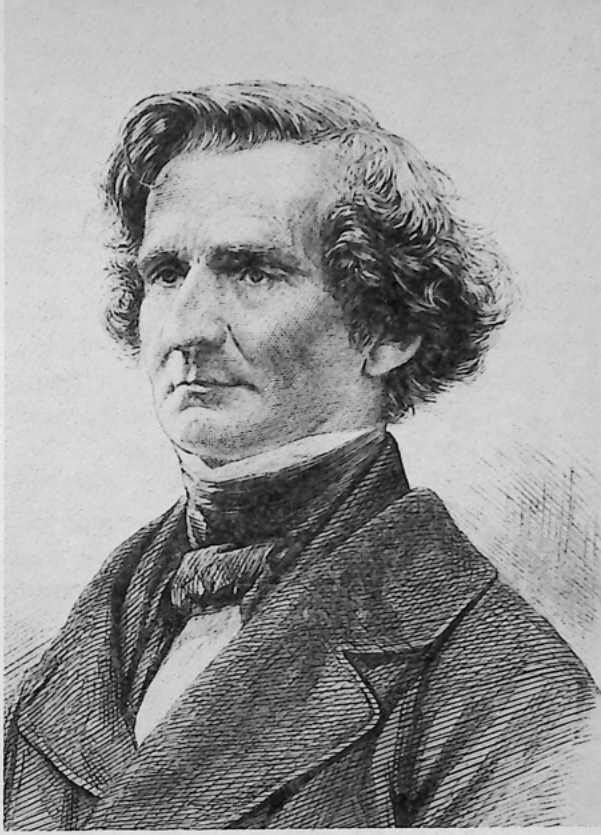
Two significant events took place in Löwenberg in 1863, and were, indeed, great musical influences in Popper's life. The visits of Berlioz and of Wagner as conductors of their own works occurred about seven months apart.

In early April, when the Prince heard that Berlioz was in Weimar to conduct his opera *Beatrice and Benedict,* he invited the composer in a personal letter to be his guest for several days, and to conduct the Löwenberg Court Orchestra. After assurance from Berlioz of his grateful acceptance of the invitation, the Prince sent Seifritz to Weimar to discuss the program. Naturally, Berlioz' works were to be performed.

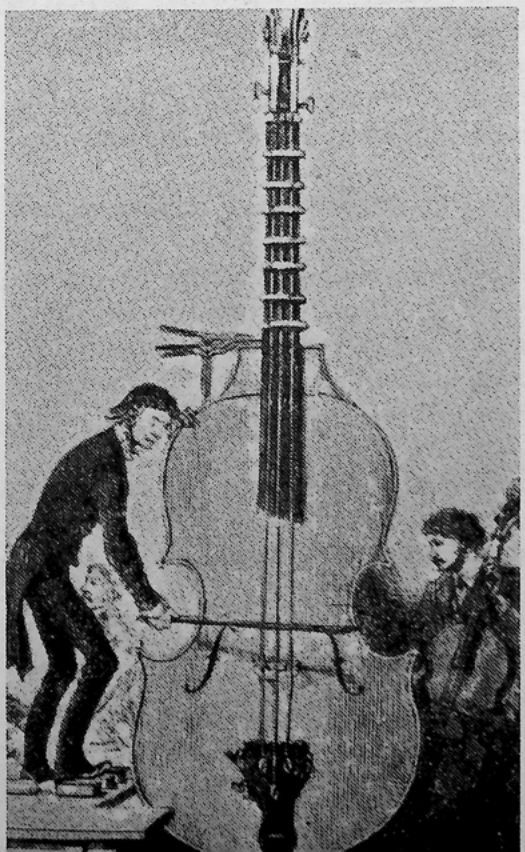
Richard Pohl, a writer of essays including some on Liszt, Wagner, and Berlioz, went with the latter to Löwenberg, leaving Weimar on April 15th. He has left us an informative report of Berlioz' visit. He points out the excellence of the orchestra and of its conductor. Special praise is given to Popper as solo cellist and to Jägerhuber as first oboe player, followed by very favorable mention of the other first chair men of the woodwind and brass sections.

The concert was on Sunday, April 19th. In his *Memoirs* Berlioz vividly described his experiences at Löwenberg preceding the rehearsal.

The artist's room was behind the music library, only a few steps through a corridor, and his apartment was also conveniently located on the same corridor. Berlioz very much appreciated these arrangements, commenting "Everything is as it should be." He was called for at his room at four p.m. to begin rehearsing. The orchestra was already in place, waiting for him. All preliminary tuning had been attended to and



Above: Hector Louis Berlioz, great French composer (1803-1869). Berlioz visited Löwenberg to conduct his own works on April 19, 1863 with David Popper as solo cellist. Below: The Octo-Bass, *invented by J.B. Vuillaume (1850) and praised by Berlioz.*



there was no sound as he entered. As he stepped to the podium the orchestra stood, greeting him in silence.

The orchestra was well acquainted with Berlioz' work, because Seifritz had done a great deal toward popularizing his music, as had Liszt earlier. Their response to his scores and his conducting was so satisfying that at the end of the rehearsal Berlioz told them they had been rehearsing only for pleasure—it was all a joke—and he had no remarks to make.

Berlioz complimented the orchestra for sureness in playing ". . . extremely irregular rhythmic passages in the Allegro . . ." and also for ". . . precision, accuracy and spirit . . ." in their playing. Seifritz played the viola solo part in *Harold in Italy*, and his performance earned the accolade "impeccable!" He also took the first violin concertmaster chair for the rest of the pieces. The Prince, who was confined to his bed and could not attend, had chosen the program from among the works of the composer: *King Lear Overture, Harold in Italy,* "Festival at Capulet's" and "Love Scene" from *Romeo and Juliet,* and *Roman Carnival Overture.*

Both the audience and the orchestra were overwhelmingly enthusiastic in their response and applause.

Pohl reports that the Prince bestowed on Berlioz the Cross of Honor—the Court Order of the Hohenzollerns—and also that Berlioz was presented with a laurel wreath and with the news that the Prince had ordered a medallion of Berlioz to be placed at the back of the stage next to one of Liszt, to commemorate the event and to identify the hall as the first one in Germany to honor the French master.

After the concert the orchestra gave a dinner in his honor, followed by a formal ball. Two days after these very warm receptions and festivities, he took his leave for Paris.

There was a touching story which Popper particularly relished because of his own involvement in it, and which he related in class one day: On this lovely spring day in late April several members of the orchestra—among them Popper—joined Seifritz to accompany Berlioz to the railroad station. By this gesture they expressed their admiration for Berlioz, and also provided him companionship for the trip. Upon their arrival, while waiting for the train, they busied themselves unloading valises and packages of scores.

Popper noticed that Berlioz shivered slightly in the cool air. Thereupon there was a quick check of Berlioz' belongings to look for his overcoat. Berlioz realized that he had left his overcoat hanging on the clothes tree in his room.

Knowing of the generally poor health of the Master, Popper sensed the situation might be serious if he continued to Paris without the protection of a wrap. As the rumble of the train grew close, he removed his own top-

coat and offered it to Berlioz, who was most grateful in accepting.

Popper was almost twenty—a vigorous young solo cellist—and he gazed with awe, and undoubtedly with admiration and concern, on the arresting countenance, furrowed and tight-lipped. The unusually wan face with high overhanging brow, sharp nose and deep-set eyes was framed in a gray halo of hair. In the early morning light he appeared both pale and austere.

The overcoats were exchanged by post, and Popper's reached him with a warm note of thanks from Berlioz.

Popper's deep respect for Berlioz was often manifested in his words—both for the man, and for the composer. The events of the musically intoxicating three days with Berlioz left deep impressions on Popper. He was happy to recall the time when he had brushed against a genius whose memory he cherished in his heart for fifty years. Berlioz died six years after his Löwenberg visit.

The following winter Popper met another great composer of magnetic personality. At the end of November Wagner arrived in Löwenberg to prepare and conduct a concert of his works. The Prince was sympathetic toward him and well-informed concerning his accomplishments.

Wagner had received the invitation from the Prince soon after a long concert tour which had taken him from Vienna to St. Petersburg. It must have been a slight shock, after conducting a body of one hundred thirty musicians in Russia, when he faced the Löwenberg Orchestra. The number of players had been augmented from the regular forty-five to about fifty-two with special additions in the woodwind, brass, and lower string sections.

The Löwenberg engagement came at a very opportune time, as Wagner was in severe financial depression. In Berlin, enroute to Löwenberg, he had been driven to sell what had been a handsome gift to him from the Grand-Duke of Baden—a gold snuff-box—for which he had obtained two hundred marks. Wagner received what he felt was a generous gift as a fee from the Prince for his services with the small orchestra—four thousand two hundred marks. In his memoirs, Wagner comments on the orchestra: ". . . it is quite tolerably equipped . . ."

Somewhere between the cautious estimate of the orchestra given by Wagner and the enthusiastic and specific approbation expressed by Berlioz we can probably arrive at a fairly accurate idea of the orchestra's standard of excellence.

The concert took place on Dec. 2, 1863, after four days of rehearsal. The program included the *Faust Overture, Preludes* to *The Mastersingers* and *Lohengrin,* "Entrance of the Mastersingers Guild." *Prelude* and "Liebestod" from *Tristan and Isolde, Tannhäuser Overture,* and "Ride of

the Valkyries." The reaction of the public was described as follows:

"The unanimous acclaim that greeted the Master increased after each piece, and would not stop until Seifritz handed a laurel wreath to Wagner, in the name of the Prince."[7]

The comment made by Wagner in his memoirs is rather subdued and short: ". . . The concert came off quite acceptably." This illustrates Wagner's uncompromising perfectionism and his blunt honesty, which won him few friends but countless admirers.

During a rehearsal there was an incident involving Popper when Wagner was conducting his *Prelude* to *Tristan and Isolde* in Löwenberg. I learned the story as it was linked through a chain of recollections: told first by Julius Cabisius to Madame Popper, then by Madame Popper to Professor Miklós Zsámboki, and from the latter's papers to myself. Zsámboki, who had become professor of cellor at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest, told the story as authentic and true in every way. Cabisius, Popper's colleague, played second cello next to Popper, and was his old friend from Prague.

It seems that Wagner stopped the orchestra to correct a wrong note. After several tries and repeated attempts to locate the trouble in the offending measure, Wagner was near to losing his temper when Popper timidly ventured the remark, "Master, maybe it is the second clarinet."

And so it was! Wagner received the young solo cellist's suggestion with a benign smile, and continued the rehearsal with his usual vigor.

There would be other points in Popper's life which brought him into involvement with Wagner. In later years, when Wagner conducted in Vienna, he recalled the Löwenberg incident to Popper in good humor.

Popper was a loyal devotee of Wagner's music, and some of his compositions reflect traces of Wagnerian harmony and progressions—a few of the pieces, and especially the studies in the *Hohe Schule* which actually resolved many technical difficulties to be encountered by cellists in Wagnerian operas.

As years passed, a rift developed between Popper and Wagner, but this fact never clouded his profound admiration for him. Wagner's profile in bas relief always hung on the wall behind the Bösendorfer piano in his home studio. And the last thing I observed on his music rack was his own final creative work: Improvisation on Richard Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nürnberg,* for cello and piano. He seemed confident that future generations of cellists would share his love for Wagner's music.

On the facing page: New York Philharmonic. Mishel Piastro, concertmaster.

During the period since his arrival at Löwenberg, Popper had enjoyed the excitement and stimulation of the presence of many great composers, conductors, and soloists. From the beginning there were frequent visits from Liszt, at which times he would play and conduct privately for his dear friend, the Prince. As years passed and after his career was established, Popper often encountered Liszt, and was aware of the strong influence of the Master on his musical life.

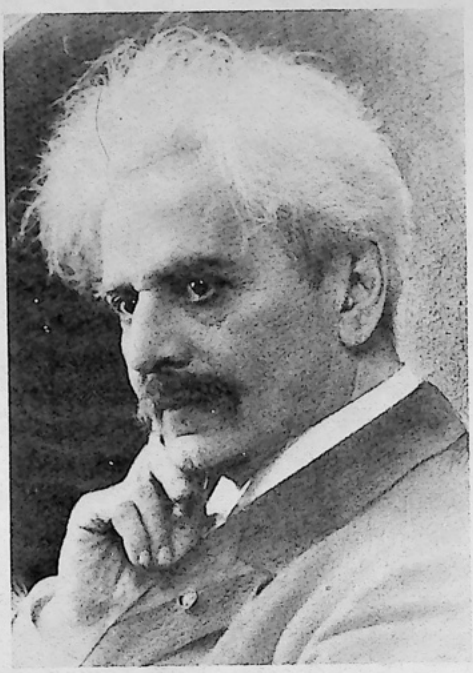
Since Popper came to Löwenberg, Bülow had made numerous visits there. At these times he found easy opportunity to observe Popper at close range. Now that the youth whom he had first heard in Prague had matured as man and as musician, Bülow had some plans which would become important, and of far-reaching reality, in Popper's career.

[1]*NZfM* (Leipzig), January 30, 1892.
[2]*NZfM* (Leipzig), October 30, 1863.
[3]It is known that the famous cellist Piatti used vibrato very seldom and in only very expressive passages.
[4]*NZfM* (Leipzig), March, 1863.
[5]*NZfM* (Leipzig), November, 1863.
[6]*NZfM* (Leipzig), June 19, 1863.
[7]Eugene von Blum, *NZfM* (Leipzig), December 18, 1863.

On the facing page: Richard Wagner. In 1863 Richard Wagner conducted the Löwenberg Orchestra in a concert of his works with David Popper as solo cellist.

Chapter VI

Concerts and Concertos



Berlin portrait of David Popper

The cello concertos most often performed in the early eighteen-sixties, in order of popularity, were by William B. Molique, George Goltermann, and François Servais, followed by Karl Eckert and Anton Rubinstein. The Boccherini and Haydn concertos appeared less frequently on programs, and the Schumann only began to be heard somewhat consistently in the seventies. None were equal to the great violin concertos of Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, nor to the near-greats of Paganini, Beriot, Vieuxtemps, Spohr, etc.

It is obvious why the critics, through the years, spoke of the dearth of cello solo music. The cello did not equal the violin in brilliance, or the piano in versatility. By the nature of the instrument, with its rich low range and very mellow timbre, it is endowed chiefly for singing passages. There is great challenge to the composer to permit the solo cello to penetrate the symphonic accompaniment.

A new cello concerto, by a first-rate composer, was timely. The orchestration should not overshadow the solo instrument, but it should adhere to a sonata-concerto treatment of thematic ideas.

Robert Volkmann was regarded as one of the modern German symphonists. Bülow showed a fondness for him, as expressed in various essays. It is known that he was searching for new and worthy compositions from the pens of his compatriots.

Volkmann's *Cello Concerto in A minor* (Op. 33) was written between 1854 and 1857, and published by Schott in 1857. The dedication was to Karl Schlesinger, solo cellist at the Viennese Court Opera and teacher at the Vienna Conservatory, who played the first performance on Nov. 22, 1857.

The concerto was not very widely accepted by cellists, and only began to be appreciated after 1864. Even then, not many cellists played it until the mid-seventies. But eventually more and more cello virtuosos included it in their repertoire, and by the end of the century it was performed frequently.

An effective way for an artist to be introduced to the public is to perform a concerto with a major orchestra under the direction of a prominent conductor, in an important musical city. This is as true today as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is also helpful if the artist plays a concerto which is a relatively new work, written by an esteemed contemporary composer.

On January 24, 1864, these fortuitous circumstances converged for a concert in Berlin. Bülow was at the height of his career as conductor, pianist, and prolific essayist.

After the announcement of the concert, the public could very well have asked the question: "Who is David Popper?" The most they would have heard about him was that he was a young man of twenty-one, solo cellist at the court of Löwenberg, and under the patronage of Prince Hohenzollern-Hechingen. If there were any press agents around, they had little material with which to elaborate upon Popper's musical past.

Popper was aware that he was taking an important step. With the prospect of this forthcoming concert under Bülow, he could have felt that promising vistas were opening up for him.

With our present-day musical standard, it is not easy to realize that in 1864 the *Concerto* by Volkmann was a serious challenge to a young cellist. The technical aspects were not problematic for Popper, but the new and unconventional form had to be met with convincing understanding. The work was unlike nineteenth century cello concertos up to that time, and even contrasted with Schumann's *Cello Concerto,* with a richer and more colorful instrumentation. The cello's role developed as a dramatic utterance, without any suggestion of programmatic content, and—as in all his works—the composer had kept in mind the classic disciplines. Diverse emotions were projected in the solo part, from aggressive to contemplative mood, and pleading strains, to sounds of resignation and melancholy, with the concerto ending on a hushed, suspended soft tone.

Before he entered the arena Popper was well aware of the eminence of

his rivals. He had many senior colleagues, all of whom were masters of their instrument, and many were skilled composers. Their reputations were established without question, and they were all in their prime.

Friedrich Grützmacher, thirty-two years old, was head of the Tonkünstlerverein in Dresden. Before going there he had been solo cellist at the Gewandhaus, in Leipzig, and teacher at the Conservatory in the same city. He concertized extensively in Europe, and was famous as a prolific composer, teacher, and author-pedagogue.

Bernhard Cossman, age forty-one, had held both Leipzig positions for about two years, preceding Grützmacher, then at the persuasion of Liszt he had settled for a time in Weimar. In 1866 he went to Moscow, where he was associated with Nicholas Rubinstein at the Conservatory. Four years later he returned to Germany and settled in Frankfurt, teaching at the Hoch Schule, and joining with Joachim in chamber music activities.

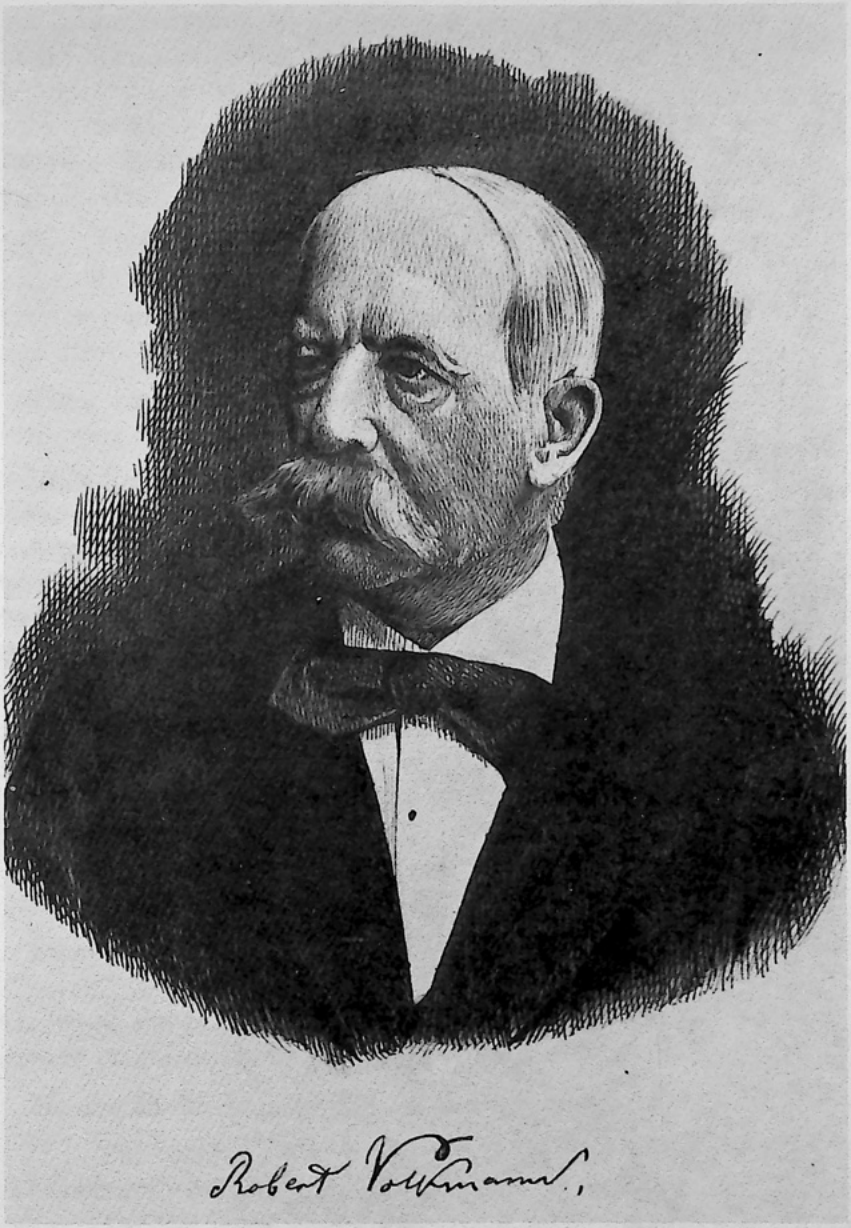
George Goltermann, thirty-nine, had been Popper's teacher. He had left the Prague Conservatory in 1862, and was at this time solo cellist in Stuttgart—a fine soloist, and outstanding representative of the Kummer-Menter school.

Alfredo Piatti, at forty-two the oldest, and certainly the most phenomenal of the contemporary cellists, had been educated at the Milan Conservatory. In 1843—the year when Popper was born—he had played with Liszt, in Munich. After touring Europe—including Russia and his native Italy—with prodigious success, he became solo cellist of the Italian Opera in London, holding this position for five years. The winters in London established a permanent pattern in his life, and he became very involved with chamber music there. He wrote many valuable compositions and transcriptions for the cello, and was one of the outstanding cellists of the nineteenth century.

Carl Davidoff, twenty-six, was five years older than Popper, and had been conspicuously successful. When only twenty-one, he had played his own first cello concerto as guest soloist with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the following year he had succeeded Grützmacher as solo cellist, and as teacher at the Leipzig Conservatory. He moved from these to similar positions in St. Petersburg in 1862, concertized widely in Europe, and eventually became director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

A few cellists of approximately Popper's age appeared, and became well-known during the decade following his debut, such as Jules Deswert, Ernest De Munck, etc.

Bülow selected Popper for the performance, knowing that the young cellist from Löwenberg would be a happy choice to undertake this modern concerto. Popper's unencumbered imagination suggested the probability of a highly individual approach to the performance. His own



Robert Volkmann from the Müller collection. In 1864 Volkmann's Cello Concerto in A minor *(Opus 33) was performed in Berlin with David Popper as soloist, conducted by Bülow.*

Friedrich Grützmacher (above) head of the Tonkünstlerverein in Dresden, and Bernhard Cossman (below), professor of cello at the Moscow Conservatory in 1886, were among Popper's rivals.

youthful self-confidence, plus Bülow's trust in his talent, relieved Popper of any serious apprehension he may have felt, even when he considered his celebrated colleagues.

In a letter to Joachim Raff, written from Berlin in January, 1864, Bülow gives an account of Popper's performance at the Berlin concert on January 24:

". . . I had great pleasure from the concert. Popper gave an extraordinarily pleasing performance of Volkmann's violoncello concerto. He is twenty-one years old, and is a remarkable talent. Has a beautiful tone, and great technique. He has a promising future. . .

These judgments from Bülow, a very particular and fastidious musician, were reinforced by favorable comment from the critics. In the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of February 12, 1864, the Berlin correspondent wrote of the concert:

"Herr Popper from Löwenberg, Kammervirtuoso of the Prince Hohenzollern-Hechingen, played Volkmann's highly poetic and dramatically important *Concerto* (Op. 33), and a concerto by Servais, for cello. We want to mention especially the excellent virtuosity of his splendid style, and the concerto's spirited orchestration. In his performance of the difficult concertpiece Herr Popper showed an extraordinary gift for his instrument. He not only played both concertos without music, but his rich, expressive, and beautifully produced tone in the characteristic violoncello range, his excellent, polished technique in doublestop and trill passages in every position of this demanding instrument, won lively acclaim from the audience."

Many of the critics did not appreciate the concerto itself. In the "Torch," a weekly magazine for critical observation of the German theatrical and musical world, February 13, 1864, Bülow discussed the critical comment:

He quoted the *National Zeitung* as saying,

". . . The composer already proved his talent to be of unusual quality. The poetically inflated beginning motive of the piece points out that here there is not the usual fodder for the virtuoso, but that an eager, robust mood has been introduced . . ." Bülow remarked: '. . . Are only the virtuosos, or also the listeners, put in the category of animals?"

Bülow continued to quote the *National Zeitung*, as follows:

". . . Furthermore, the headstrong, whimsical, and purely subjective are predominant in the concerto. The entire musical substance is split up into the strangest interjections!

Joachim Raff, from the Mason collection. Raff, greatly renowned German composer and pedagogue (1822-1882), received a letter from Bülow recounting Popper's laudatory Berlin concert on January 24, 1864.

"An instrument which emerges from the ranks of the orchestra should never desert a guise of friendly urbanity . . ."

He next reported a statement from the *Fremdenblatt* as:

". . . (it was written) without form or charm, and without any knowledge of the cello or of the orchestra. This musical piece, with its only theme elaborated in various sections and interrupted by long ejections from the solo instrument, has a narcotic effect."

His quotation from the *Kreuzzeitung* gives an opposing view:

"The concerto is satisfying, not only as a vehicle for the solo cello for which it was written, but also, in a sense, as an all-inclusive tone-poem for the orchestra. It speaks meaningfully by means of harmonic and melodic beauty."

At the conclusion of the article, Bülow summed up matters:

". . . Well, here I sit again, in a dilemma (at the cross-roads), and extracting the highlights from the bitter press, convinced that Herr Popper was extraordinarily pleasing with this concerto . . ."

Herr Popper successfully put up with the inconvenience of criticism concerning the concerto. In his biography of Robert Volkmann, Hans Volkmann, the great-nephew of the composer, and musicologist, writes that Popper played the concerto everywhere in Europe. He also relates that Volkmann himself wrote four cadenzas for the work, Klengel wrote one, and Popper wrote one, which was an improvement over all the others!

Popper made a few changes, eliminating some reiteration of certain sections, without damaging the work, but with the increasing success of each performance through the years he proved that his contribution had been worthwhile. He naturally received Volkmann's consent, and their relationship remained cordial always.

In writing of Volkmann in 1858, Eduard Hanslick, the respected Viennese critic who was often quoted throughout the various European journals, appraised him thus:

". . . The melodic inventiveness is spontaneous and original—but never pompous. The construction, the details, the orchestration—all disclose the experienced discriminating hand of a master . . .

On Dec. 2, 1897, Popper appeared with the Philharmonic at the Crystal Palace in London, under Sir Alexander Mackenzie. This was his last London performance, and his final playing of the Volkmann Concerto.

The new modern trend was represented by Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner,

and their influence was felt to some degree by Volkmann. He developed a romantic and dramatic lyricism which was clothed in splendid symphonic richness and presented in a classical manner. Volkmann handled this delicately balanced style with ingenuity and sincerity, and moved into the musical limelight of the nineteenth century.

In time, Volkmann's music, with its romantic cast and classical tendency began to seem out of step with contemporary taste. He remained a composer of absolute music, adhering with a certain moral sense and devotion to Beethoven's spirit, under classical restraints, Brahms would be more successful in solving this dilemma. Unfortunately, he did not write a cello concerto.

At the invitation of Liszt, Volkmann joined the faculty of the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest in 1875, where he taught until his death in 1883. He had previously settled there in 1843, and had been a permanent resident except for a short period spent in Vienna from 1854-1858. The little Baroque style house in which he lived now bears a commemorative tablet in his honor.

By the seventies and during the eighties, Volkmann's Cello Concerto was played by every violoncellist, and had gained greater importance than the concertos of Molique, Servais, Goltermann, and Rubinstein. Only after some time was it supplanted by those of Schumann and Saint-Saëns. When most of Volkmann's works began to fade out of public consciousness, the cello concerto continued to hold its own popularity, which was stimulated by Popper's frequent performances. Even several decades beyond the turn of the century most music schools included the work in the cello curriculum.

In music encyclopedias, Popper's departure from Löwenberg is dated as 1863, at which time he began his career as a traveling concert artist. In the absence of any available evidence to the contrary, it seems likely that Popper retained his post at Löwenberg, with absences permitted for short tours. Many of his colleagues held positions of some security, yet were able to augment their activities with additional concerts. During the years between 1863 and 1868 his appearances in Löwenberg were frequent, and one has the impression that they were taking place on Popper's "home base." If his former salary was not retained—for which there is no proof—he must have had generous compensation from the court and from Seifritz, in the interims between concert tours—certainly only thus would he have been assured of an ample income.

After his return to Löwenberg, having followed the Berlin concert with performances in various German cities, in Prague, and in London, he was asked to play the Volkmann *Concerto* on April 17, 1864.

The following month there appeared, in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*

in Leipzig, one of a series of articles by the editor, Karl Franz Brendel, in which he discussed musical activities, standards, and personalities at Löwenberg. In the issue of May 6th he wrote of Popper:

". . . We have often spoken of Kammer-Virtuoso Popper in this paper. His appearance in Breslau last fall, in Leipzig, and later in Berlin on one of the Bülow concerts, gave wide recognition to his accomplishments; after these he played in his native city of Prague, and later in London receiving more than the usual recognition. I myself heard him, privately, a few years ago (in Leipzig) and am astonished at his rapid climb to a high artistic development. He already belongs among our outstanding cellists, and his further progress should guarantee that he will soon reach a pinnacle where only a few rivals can stand near him . . ."

For a composer whose works were written chiefly for the cello, it is noteworthy that Popper's first published opus was *Five Songs* (Op. 2) for voice, published by Eugen Simmer in Berlin, in 1864. His urge to express himself in songs was imbedded in his nature. We know that he was exposed to the songs of Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn at a very early age, when music and poetry were part of the family's daily recreation. It is, therefore, not surprising that his first efforts in composition turned towards songwriting. In his writing of cello music, this inclination was evident in his proclivity to work in smaller forms. The poems on which the songs were written were by Heine, Eichendorff, and Böttger, all representing the late romantic school of the nineteenth century.

In discussing published songs of a group of three composers, new on the market, the critic G. Carson wrote of Popper's *Five Songs:*

". . . Among the songs of the three composers, Popper's superiority in free and independent treatment shows his inner understanding of the text . . ."[1]

At this time, two pieces by Popper were heard on practically all of his concert programs—the "Arlequin" and the "Papillon" from *Six Character Pieces* (Op. 3) published by Bartholf Senff, who had published works of many composers, including Liszt, Rubinstein, and Schumann. Soon after their publication, in the fall of 1864, their popularity was proven by the acceptance by all his colleagues. The contact and relationship with publisher Senff continued for a long time, with much cordiality. Senff published additional Popper compositions, which reached great popularity. By the end of the century the "Arlequin" and "Papillon"—especially the latter—were on practically every cello recital program.

This fact induced George Bernard Shaw, writing as a London music critic, after hearing a series of cellists—Hollmann, Klengel, Becker, Gérardy, and others—to remark:

Joseph Hollmann was among the many cellists on whose recital program Popper's "Arlequin" and "Papillon" appeared.

". . . I have heard that 'Mazurka Caprice' of Popper's not less than fourteen thousand times within two seasons. It has been encored each time, and the encore piece has always been Popper's "Papillon"—a pleasing title, but one which strikes terror in me. 'Kol Nidrei' is quite a novelty after Popper . . . One can never feel sure that those Papillon will not pop out at the last moment and make me wish I had never been born."

I don't believe that this kind of publicity was resented by Popper. Other publishers also issued these pieces, not only in Europe, but in America as well.

In June 1864 Popper gave a joint recital with Damrosch and Silberschmidt in Breslau. On the program he played a "Romanesca"—not known to have been published—and a "Phantasiestück," and joined with Silberschmidt and Damrosch in a performance of the *D minor Trio* by Schumann.

The Allgemeiner Deutscher Tonkünstler Verein, an organization representing the most important musical activity in Germany, and which for twenty-five years had Liszt at its head as President, held an annual August festival in a different city. The purpose was to promote new works by the modern composers, and to create a unity among the various factions of the music world.

Liszt had founded the organization in 1859, and much prestige was associated with its presentations. Composers and artists were invited to be heard, and derived national attention and extensive publicity from their participation.

In 1864 the festival was planned for Karlsruhe, and would honor, among others, Volkmann—then forty-nine years old. Two of his works were presented: *Trio in B flat* (Op. 5), and the *Violoncello Concerto* (Op. 33). Popper was scheduled to play the latter, with Bülow conducting, but as Bülow became suddenly ill, Seifritz took his place. The Volkmann *Trio* was played by violinist Reményi, pianist Rotscher, and Popper. Eduard Reményi had already achieved considerable fame as a virtuoso. In 1853 he had toured with Brahms, and he concertized all over the world until his death. The correspondent said of Popper that he ". . . proved to be a highly gifted interpreter of this difficult concerto. He is an excellent artist who greatly contributed to the fine ensemble work in the *Trio.*"[2]

As a result of the Karlsruhe appearance, Popper gained a reputation throughout the musical world as a young virtuoso possessing unusual and distinctive attributes. The very influential critic and editor Brendel had been in the forefront of the recognition of Popper as an artist, when he had stated two years earlier that Popper represented the "modern artist." As he matured he developed an individual style of his own, which

Anton Rubinstein's Sonata *(Opus 18) was performed by Popper frequently, with much success.*

was neither the robust and somewhat pedantic German manner of playing, nor the delicately light approach to bowing of the French school. Critics emphasized three characteristics which set him apart from his colleagues: elegant bowing, noble, refined style, and an extraordinarily sensuous tone—sometimes intriguingly intimate in quality.

It is a fact that most critics did not understand Volkmann's *Cello Concerto.* The capricious handling of motives contrasting with its warm lyric mood placed it on unsure footing with audiences and critics alike. However, the consistent success of Popper's interpretation was acknowledged everywhere, and not only made the concerto acceptable—even popular—but also put a stamp of uniqueness on Popper's style of cello playing.

On Nov. 27, 1864, Popper performed the new Rubinstein *Cello Concerto* (Op. 65), for the first time in Germany, in Löwenberg. Rubinstein was then at the height of his popularity, and there was scarcely any musical city which did not present some of his compositions—operas, symphonies, concertos, sonatas, etc. A local reporter from Löwenberg stated: ". . . our beloved violoncello virtuoso David Popper, considering the shortness of time he had in which to learn the piece, performed it in a masterly manner and truly artistic way . . ." The concerto itself received a less favorable reaction from the critic: ". . . The *Concerto* proved to be a grateful work for the performer, and is superior to many contemporary pieces, which are full of empty figurations and boring cantilenas. Nevertheless, we found it disappointing, and could not see any progress in Rubinstein's muse." He went on to say, ". . . the concerto is in a noble style, but does not offer anything new, and does not leave a lasting impression on the listener."[3]

Popper was asked to perform the Rubinstein *Concerto* once more that winter—on January 21, 1865, in Berlin. The critic was less kind than the one in Löwenberg.

This correspondent for *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik,* Alexis Hollander, should be noted, as in his review he made evaluations of the violoncello which pointed up the great difficulties all composers face when they pit the instrument against an orchestra, in concerto form. He describes the "nature of the instrument," with its low register, as struggling "hopelessly, like a bass voice trying to compete with a coloratura soprano." The *Concerto* itself he describes as "too great an outpouring of dark oppressiveness, without the charm of his (Rubinstein's) often shown inventiveness . . ." He gave hearty approval to Popper's playing, saying, ". . . Popper's warm tone and technical perfection saved the composition from arousing public antagonism about the concerto, especially as Popper gave a praiseworthy and excellently reliable performance . . ."

Above: Franz Liszt, with whom Piatti played in Munich, 1843—the year when Popper was born. Below: Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901), senior colleague of Popper, was a celebrated virtuoso, composer and editor of cello music. As of 1844, Piatti was frequently associated with Joachim.

The sentiments expressed by Hollander re: the violoncello as a solo instrument, and even his prediction that the cello concerto was doomed as a composers' form, were echoed by other critics as time went on, for example by Hanslick in 1881, by George Bernard Shaw in 1891, and by Max Marschalk, music critic for the *Vossische Zeitung* in Berlin, in 1895. Actually, cello concerto composition or performance continues, in modern circumstances, to present some difficulty or dilemma because of the register of the cello. But very skillful writing dispels some of the confusion, and most cello virtuosos accept, and try to rise above, the challenge.

The Rubinstein *Concerto* continued before the public, in spite of the critics. In general, the performing artists received the praise, with few kudos for the composition. It received its chief attention in Russia, where it was performed by Davidoff, Brandokoff, and Fitzenhagen. To my knowledge, Popper played it only a few times during his lifetime. But he performed Rubinstein's *Sonata* (Op. 18) frequently, with much success.

Although sometimes coping with musical works which had dubious acceptance by the public, Popper as a virtuoso never suffered from the accusation that his recitals were dull. The qualities of his extraordinary playing often overcame the limitations of a work he was to perform, and the projection of his individuality could enhance even an unimportant composition.

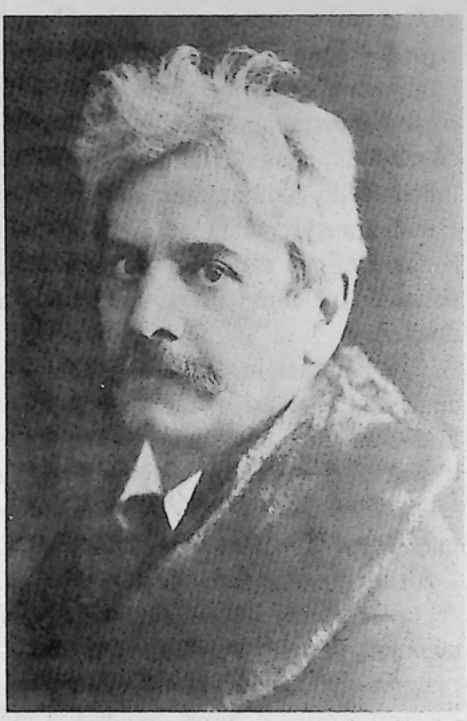
In December, 1864, Popper had anticipated his Berlin concert with two other performances—one in Prague, and one in Magdenburg. In his native city, he played the above-mentioned *Sonata* by Rubinstein, *Concerto* by Servais, "Air" by Pergolesi, "Sarabande" by Bach, and a group of his own small pieces, all with "great success." In Magdeburg, the "well-known" cello virtuoso introduced the Volkmann *Concerto.*

The Cäcilienverein of Prague also reported that Popper had concertized under their auspices during December, but no further information can be found regarding this performance.

[1]*NZfM* (Leipzig), November, 1865.
[2]*NZfM* (Leipzig), August, 1864.
[3]*NZfM* (Leipzig), January, 1865.

Chapter VII

Salon Pieces and First Concerto



Portrait of David Popper, Moscow (1884).

When we refer to Popper's concert appearances in solo recitals and on symphony programs, we must remember that other artists—singers and instrumentalists—were often participating on the same programs. The rare exceptions to the customary mixed concert would be presented by artists of such lustre as Paganini, Bülow, Clara Schumann and Joachim. This diversity in the programs held public appeal, because the wide spectrum of musical tastes received satisfaction, and a variety of preferences for solo instruments were gratified. There was usually something for almost everyone! Many of the music loving public would buy tickets because of the generous assortment of artists, instruments, and repertoire, thus reducing the financial risks of the concert undertaking.

Amateur musicians must be given credit for their cultivation of music, and participation as concert audiences. The appetites of music lovers were partly satisified in the concert halls, and further stimulated by music-making in the home—where the piano was an indispensable symbol of a cultured middle-class life. Their enthusiasms ranged from the symphonies of the classic masters (of which two hand and four hand piano transcriptions were plentiful) to short pieces communicating poetic sentiments and impressions, and were well represented in the average concert programs. Such uncomplicated musical entertainment satisfied

contemporary demands for pleasant diversion. Melodies which were instantly effective, bringing to mind familiar associations, had popular appeal, and lured audiences into the concert halls. Phantasies, potpourris, variations, and improvisations on familiar operatic arias were written for every solo instrument, and were usually part of the concert program. The cello was not spared from these well-favored works.

As an enterprise, concert presentation could not depend only on the popular appeal of the programs, but needed support from the prosperous members of society: aristocrats, financial magnates and industrialists. Musical organizations sprang up in every city, whose leaders helped to promote artists and inspired support for musical activities and events among the populace. Sumptuous homes were opened to invited guests for house concerts. The music room where such house concerts took place was known as the "Salon" and was especially suited for entertainments of a semi-formal nature, with the aura of elegance in furnishings and decor. Silk brocaded upholstered chairs, (often in Louis XIV style) a lavishly carved and decorated grand piano, a golden harp lighting up a corner with its classic beauty, and, of course, impressive paintings depicting subjects of romantic or historical interest, comprised the refined environment.

As with many other artists, Popper had learned the effective technique of soliciting patronage within this inner circle of members of the musical leadership, negotiating for concert engagements from his headquarters in Löwenberg. Armed with information concerning musical activities, music societies, orchestra conductors and many relevant details, he kept up a flow of correspondence with persons of influence whose prestige might lend support for furthering his career as a concert artist and as a composer. Many revealing letters written by prominent virtuosos of the nineteenth century demonstrate that the artist felt perpetual concern for the cultivation of influence and the seeking of patronage—which preoccupation sapped him of energy and time needed in his creative pursuits.

The problem remains organically the same today. The artist must push his own way, searching for a source of influence he can bring to bear in securing concert engagements, contracts, and other employment. The cast has altered a little: in place of the aristocrats, and the powerful individual wealth, stand more corporate images, such as universities, colleges, large civic or state associations, orchestras great and small, with purse-strings often governed by big foundations. Certain eager and enthusiastic people continue to find a little personal glory in trying—sometimes successfully—to influence decisions of these larger entities, and become identified as cultural leaders.

Not until a virtuoso was extremely popular and in great demand would an impressario step into the picture and take charge, relieving the artist of personal solicitation for his engagements. (This is as true today: if a performer has proved he is no financial risk, and even has a good financial potential, it is not a problem to get a good manager). In one letter to a friend and publisher Popper mentions his aversion to writing letters—a dislike justified by his intense occupation with this activity in early years.

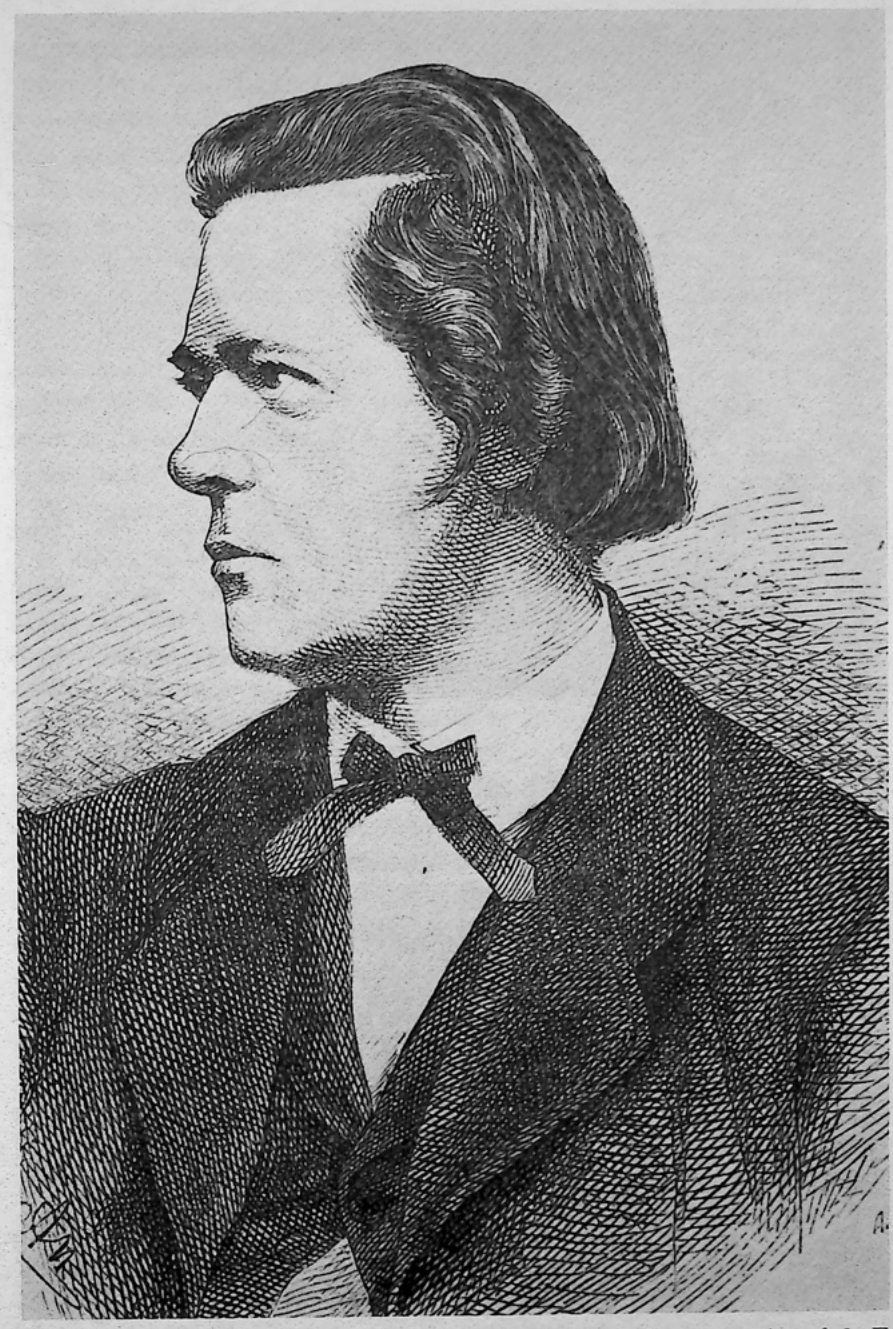
Popper managed his budding career well. After the Berlin concert with Bülow, and as the seasons followed each other, his appearances in Germany, Austria and Switzerland steadily increased in number.

His first tour of Switzerland was in December, 1866. In Bern, on Dec. 9th, he played the Boccherini *Concerto,* under conductor Edward Franck, and also his "Arlequin" and "Papillon" *(Maskenball Scenes).* In Basel, on the 12th, he performed the Volkmann *Concerto,* and added the *Maskenball Scenes.* Then on the 15th he appeared in Zürich, in a concert of the General Music Society, with the well-known Swiss conductor, Friedrich Hegar, leading the orchestra. Here he first played the *Suite in G,* by Bach, then the Boccherini *Concerto,* and finished with the *Maskenball Scenes.* There was a second concert—a chamber music presentation with the Choral Society of Zürich—on the 22nd. The conductor Hegar, in his role as violinist, the pianist Kirchner, and Popper played the *F Major Trio* by Schumann, and Popper also performed a group of solos.[1]

After these concerts he returned to his Löwenberg home base, and in January of 1867, launched his new season under the auspices of the Euterp Society in Leipzig. He performed the Boccherini, and the Molique, *Concertos,* and with each orchestra appearance he played the *Maskenball Scenes*—a gesture beginning to be expected by his audiences.

There soon came a time when his reputation as a virtuoso and as a composer for cello music began to merge, as performances of his works were heard repeatedly on the programs of many other artists as well as on his own. Although it was not usual to perform the work of a potential rival, especially when competition was rather strong, his colleagues seemed to appreciate that when they played Popper compositions, the success of the pieces added to their own personal success. Popper was able to discriminate effectively in producing music which satisfied the demand for appealing music, and elevated the standard of cello salon literature, while incorporating a special touch of originality and new technical effects. Many years later the Viennese critic, Hanslick, described and paid tribute to his special accomplishment as a composer:

". . . The concert literature of the violoncello, as is correctly understood, is sparse, and no virtuoso could be blamed when he fills this gap with his own compositions. Popper has composed a number of very ef-



Theodore Kirchner. On December 22, 1866 a chamber music presentation of the F Major Trio *by Schumann, with the Choral Society of Zürich, was made by the conductor Hegar in his role as violinist, the pianist Kirchner, and Popper.*

On December 15, 1866 David Popper appeared in Zürich in a concert of the General Music Society, with the well-known Swiss conductor, Friedrich Hegar leading the orchestra.

fective bravura pieces . . . His pieces found acclaim everywhere, and are also played by other virtuosos, and sell well. This all proves their practical value. They are cleverly made little things, which betray more coquettishness than creative strength . . ."

Leipzig, the hub of the music publishing business, kept engravers busy full time, to satisfy the demand for "clever little things" which poured from the pens of not only Popper, but also his colleagues. George Goltermann, Grützmacher, Deswert, Cossmann, Davidoff, Klengel, and many others wrote a generous flood of elegies, romances, pseudo-Russian and pseudo-Hungarian dances, lullabies, serenades, ballades, nocturnes, and the like. Most of these seeped over from the salons, and were heard in the concert halls, a few enduring well beyond the turn of the century.

In the last half of the century, the publisher Jean André, of Offenbach, Germany, listed approximately two hundred composers of works for cello: for solo, transcriptions of operatic airs and other sources, and ensembles for two, three, and four cellos. Dotzauer, Kummer, Franchomme, and many other important cellists produced their share of transcriptions from opera. The collaborating team of A. Lindner and F. Ferbert announced their output of eighty-seven opera transcriptions for cello and piano.

The salon music attracted students and amateurs in such numbers that it became useful to edit all of it written for cello with indications of the "appropriate" interpretation. In these improved editions, marks in the score showed where to use "vibrato," and "slide," to give intense expression to the music, and verbal suggestions were given to the performer as to how to project various emotional, even psychological, states at given points in the music.

Within the average diet of fashionable and entertaining cello pieces, Popper's compositions presented a fresh, distinctive flavor, and they held their popularity for several decades. They were fast to gain wide acceptance, and to be heard on most cello recitals. It did not take long for the publishers to realize that Popper's music represented good potential revenue for them, and by 1871 a long list of his works were on the shelves of the music dealers.

Performances of his works by his colleagues began in the late sixties, with Bürger in Berlin, Fitzenhagen in Moscow, Hegar in Leipzig, and Lessert in Paris. From there on, they were played by every cellist, everywhere. Popper was well established in the public mind as a virtuoso and as a composer when his first *Concerto, D minor* (Op. 8), was performed in Löwenberg.

The new concerto was presented in December, 1865. This was Popper's first work of a large dimension.

With his intimate knowledge of the Volkmann *Concerto,* and of others—great, good, and average—he was no stranger to the challenges of writing such an ambitious work. His knowledge and experience of instrumentation had been enriched under the great masters of the day, when they conducted their own works at Löwenberg, and also when Seifritz conducted their compositions for the pleasure of the Prince.

The introduction of a new and aspiring work of grand dimensions, by an already celebrated twenty-two year old composer-virtuoso, was sure to draw the attention of the correspondent from the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik,* of Leipzig, whose judgment would be read by the musical public throughout Germany. This journal, which had been founded by the great romantic composer Robert Schumann, in 1834, was regarded as the most important musical periodical of the time. The high literary standard which he had begun was perpetuated by many great contributors, including Liszt, Wagner, Bülow, and the co-editors Brendel and Pohl. Critic-reporters from major European and American cities also helped assemble musical news from great distances.

If Popper had expectations of a world-shaking review after the performance, he probably experienced some disappointment. It certainly was not an ill report, but neither did it place him suddenly on a pedestal

David Popper in 1886. Popper was able to discriminate effectively in producing music which satisfied the demand for appealing music, and elevated the standard of cello salon literature, while incorporating a special touch of originality and new technical effects.

of great success, and Popper may have been alerted to some of the problems within the unique combination of cello and orchestra known as the cello concerto.

The performance received the following account:

"We mention an original new work, performed here for the first time—the *Violoncello Concerto in D minor* (Op. 8), composed by Herr Popper. We are pleased to discover that, unlike most cello concertos, it avoids a potpourri-like style, moving forward and bringing unity to the work. Although he has not quite mastered the form, or achieved a full homogeneous style, the concerto offers much that is piquant and effective in ideas and in instrumentation. Re: Herr Popper's playing—nothing more could be desired . . ."[2]

George Goltermann, to whom the concerto was dedicated, performed it in Stuttgart with that city's orchestra, in March, 1867. If the composer was present at the event—a reasonable presumption on our part—the former teacher and pupil must have felt genuine pride for each other. At any rate, the occasion could have been a stirring experience for both, and one that sealed their mutual esteem for a lifetime.

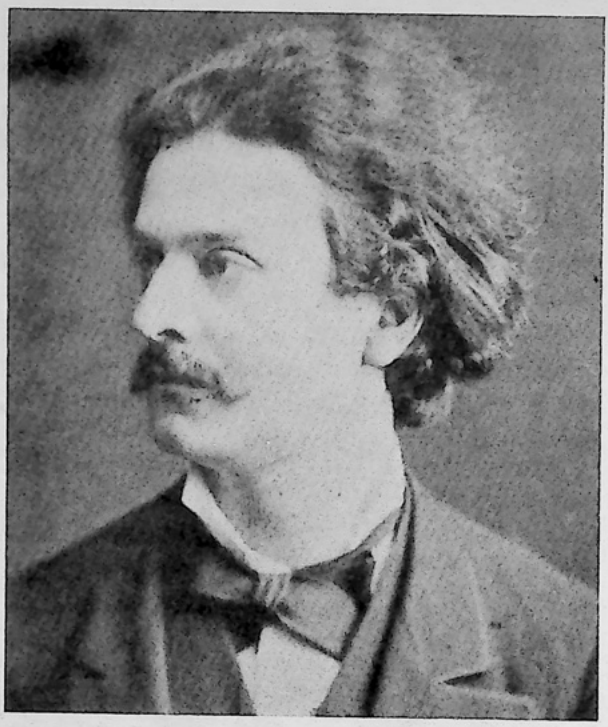
The concerto undoubtedly was somewhat successful. It was published in 1871 by Popper's Offenbach publisher, J. André, and with scores both for piano, and orchestra, accompaniment.

When, a few years later, Popper sketched out his second *Concerto, in E minor* he remembered the critic's evaluation of his Op. 8, and took heed. He already had a degree of success, demonstrating his judgment in blending orchestral texture with the character of his solo instrument.

[1]*NZfM* (Leipzig) 1867.
[2]*NZfM* (Leipzig), January, 1866.

Chapter VIII

Romance



David Popper in 1872.

Very little is known of the romantic side of David Popper's life. No doubt there were many incidents, which if disclosed would have added color and warmth to our records. Letters, perhaps, could have revealed some measure of his intimate life, but most of these, as stated earlier, were lost in a fire. The diaries of some of his famous contemporaries tell a great deal. But in the images we have of Popper's social and public behavior, the amorous undercurrents are almost totally concealed under a veil of propriety.

Popper possessed a charisma, felt by his audiences in the concert halls and also by those who came in contact with him in his social life. He was handsome, a near-celebrity at twenty-two, a pleasant conversationalist and patient listener—all attributes which help toward social success.

In searching for psychologically interesting facets of an artist's life, or for influences which helped to form his personality, a scrutiny of the artist's creative output can be an aid in arriving at likely assumptions. In the painter's art, or in literature, sometimes can be found vivid records reflecting personal ties. The musician is able to release emotions in sound, and the listener then can translate the "story" from his own responses to the music.

After the publication of Popper's "Romance" (Op. 5), there appeared a

review, as follows: ". . .it is an entertaining piece, and pleasing as well; yet, for the most part, it is a Salon outburst of emotionalism. . ."[1]

One can observe, in the vivid language employed at certain points in the score to indicate emotional sensations which the performer should project, Popper's intention to make sure that the music receives a stirring and dramatic performance. It begins with the instruction "with tenderness, and singing" and continues with the suggestions of "with hesitancy," "rapturously," "with enthusiasm and utmost intensification," then "maximum force." Finally, there is a long coda, gradually diminishing to calm repose.

Many love letters have been no more expressive than these obviously erotic directives in the score. The dedication inscribed on the top of the front page reads: "To Fraulein Anna Mehlig, Court Pianist to the Royal House of Wurtenberg," and could be either a testimony of respect or of affection. The significant communication is in the music itself, which evokes the ecstatic emotions of a young man with unabashed fervor—and in the title which he gave the piece.

Anna Mehlig (1843-1928) was a very popular concert pianist, sought after on two continents for many years. Grove's Dictionary said of her playing that she was "equipped with great power and a refined, poetic style, and had a large repertoire." After her marriage, to a business-man named Falk, she resided in Antwerp, and her concert tours became less frequent than in previous years. Her last American tour was in 1870, but for long after that she played on the European continent and in England. In London she not only played solos, but was very active in chamber music, and among special presentations she performed "Introduction and Polonaise" for piano and cello, by Chopin, with Piatti, in 1876.

There may possibly have been several meetings between Miss Mehlig and Popper, both before and after the publication of the "Romance." They both appeared as soloists on a symphony concert in Chemnitz on Dec. 6, 1866. On that program Popper performed a concerto by George Goltermann, the middle movement from Molique's concerto, and three of his own solo pieces—among them the "Romance."

The first edition was adorned with an elegant front cover, of elaborate design, with a floral frame enclosing a landscape view of a sumptuous palace against a background of cypress trees, seen through a gate in a stone wall, and having a garden and fountain in the foreground. This scene—so suggestive of a glamorous life—was not in a new tradition. The custom of using ornate covers on music publications can be traced back to even before the time of Haydn. We can only guess if it had any relevance to the idea of the composition, to the publisher's promotion of

Sophie Menter, David Popper's wife of 14 years and ardent disciple of Franz Liszt. Popper's liaison with Sophie Menter was stormy.

the piece for sale, to the fashion of the day, or was part of the total tribute to Miss Mehlig.

As a coda to the episode of the "Romance," the composition became part of the repertoire for many cellists, and its popularity extended through three publications: the first was by E.W. Fritzsch in Berlin, the second by C.F.W. Siegel in Leipzig, and the third by Augener Ltd., in London. This last firm issued the piece separately for not only cello, but also for violin and for viola, with the original piano accompaniment. It should be noted, however, that in the English publication, the German indications of expression were either eliminated, or changed to less emotional Italian directives, such as "dolce e cantando," "con espressione," etc.

As one attempts to trace the romantic threads of Popper's life, it appears that lady pianists held some attraction for him. We are on more definite ground when another phenomenal pianist—an extraordinary beauty—crossed his path, in the person of Sophie Menter. She gave her debut at age fifteen in Munich. In 1865, at age nineteen, she performed in Frankfurt, and was received by the public and press with great praise. From then on, her name appeared in all the large music centers of Germany. During the next six years she was preoccupied—as was Popper—with the establishment of a promising career, which held priority over any romantic interests. The blooming of their mutual attraction for each other came to fulfillment with their marriage, in 1872.

With an eye on the "Romance" dedication—whatever it implied—the accidental similarities between the two ladies are worth mentioning here. Both were nearly the same age, both studied with the famous teacher, Lebert, in Strassburg, and both became members of Liszt's class in Weimar, in 1869. There is no reason, beyond these similarities, and the very remarkable success each enjoyed, and the odd circumstance that Popper was attracted to each of them in turn, to imagine any competition between them. Here we let the matter of the hearts rest.

In the early spring of 1867, it happened that Leopold Auer and Popper each received an invitation from the well-known concert manager, Bernard Ullmann, to join with a group of additional fine artists on a fall concert tour in Austria and Hungary.

As respite from the stresses of preceding winter concerts, and to be well-refreshed before the new venture, Popper spent part of the summer vacation in the little town of Bad Ischl. This beautiful alpine resort, located about thirty miles from Salzburg, was a very popular place, sought after by many Viennese artists, and by those affluent citizens who were able to escape the hot summer weather of the capital.

The magnificent environment and scenery attracted the Emperor

Franz Joseph to his summer palace there, where he was followed by a retinue of his court. A glow of elegance was blended with a quasi-rustic charm.

As he was particularly interested in Vienna, Popper visited the nearby alpine resorts every year. Many of his young colleagues followed the same strategy—for relaxation after a strenuous season. The beneficial effects of the leisurely life, the friendly services at the hotels and pensions, and good camaraderie were all conducive to well-being.

In the summer of 1867, a group of Popper's close friends were there: among them Leopold Auer, at twenty-one concertmaster of the Düsseldorf Orchestra, and Ignaz Brüll, Viennese pianist and composer, also age twenty-one, whose first opera had already been performed three years earlier. Popper, who had gathered enough European success to be considered one of the best cellists of the time and esteemed as a composer of his instrument, at age twenty-four was a little their senior.

As Auer describes in his memoirs,[2] there were others in the group, middle-aged and important figures of the Viennese musical life: Goldmark, thirty-seven, Brahms, thirty-four, Epstein—Viennese pianist—thirty-five, and Leschetizky, thirty-seven, who was a frequent visitor to Bad Ischl even before settling permanently in Vienna. They all met regularly at their reserved table for after-dinner coffee at the Walter's Coffee-House. Much good conversation took place, spiced with high humor and spontaneous wit. Sometimes there would be teasing comments aimed at each other, or even jibes at notable contemporary personages. Brahms was not frugal in his outspoken remarks, which could be aimed at anyone. His favorite target was the symphonist Bruckner.

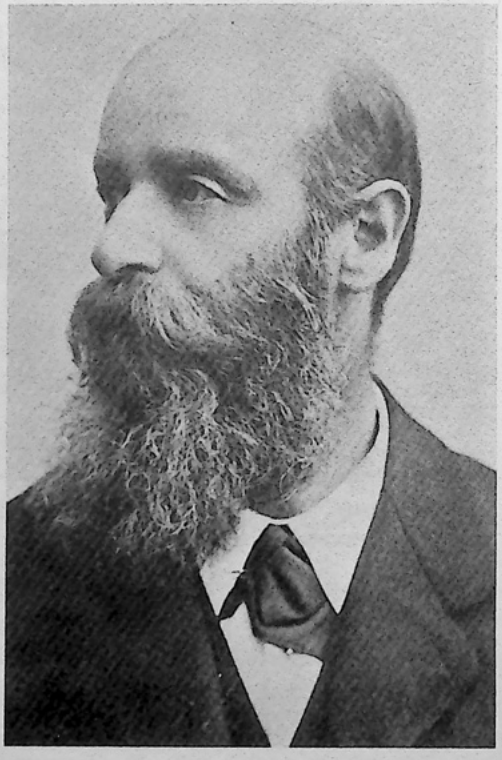
There was some disdain from the German musical establishment and press concerning Mr. Ullmann, with whom Popper was to be associated in the fall, and his traveling concert groups. He had come originally from New York, and operated business on both continents to great advantage.

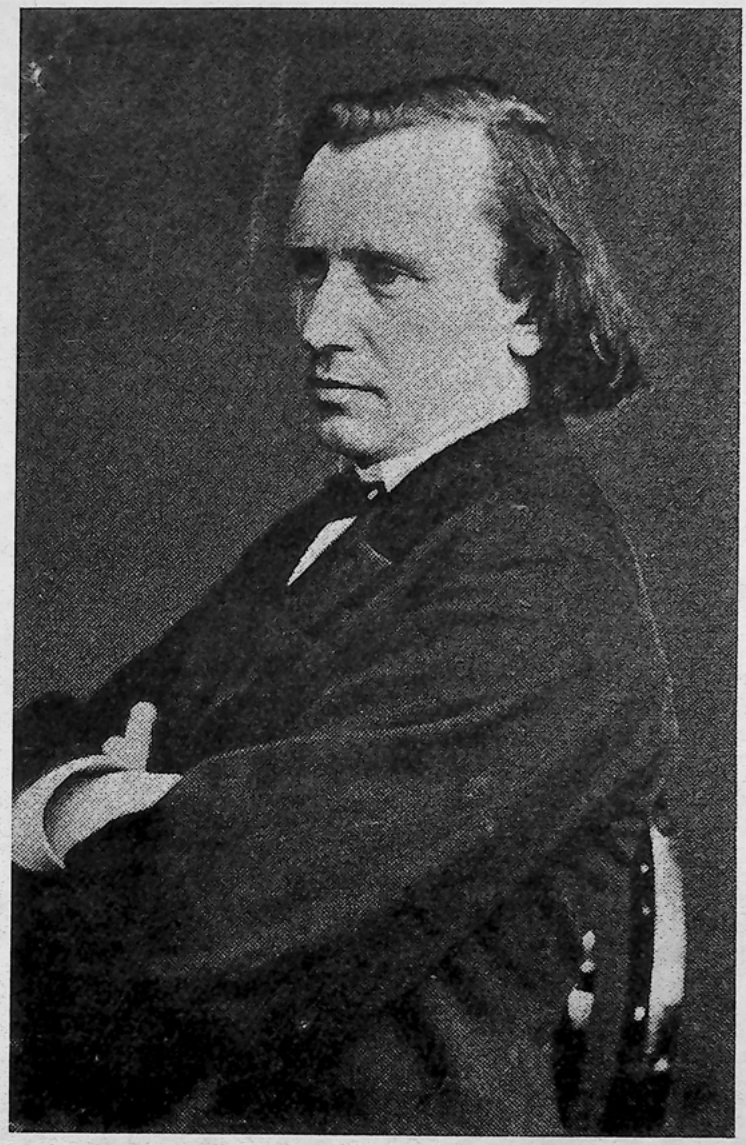
His efficient and very active publicity were observed with alarm and suspicion by the defenders of German culture, who feared the intrusion of the commercial spirit into the realm of art. The basic formula was a traveling and collaborating group of virtuosos and usually one singer, performing solos, and together in small ensembles, thus delivering a great variety of repertoire—an entertaining musical sampling—to the public, and satisfying many musical tastes.

Writing from Lausanne, in April, 1865, the correspondent to the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* described an Ullmann concert which had taken place earlier that season. Notice the designation "Patti Concert"—derived from the famous coloratura who was the constant nucleus of his organized group:

Leopold Auer. In 1867 Auer, a close friend of Popper, was twenty-one years old and concertmaster of the Düsseldorf Orchestra.

Viennese pianist, Julius Epstein (above) was among the important figures in 1867 Viennese musical life remembered by Auer in his memoirs. Viennese pianist and composer, Ignaz Brüll (below) was twenty-one and among Popper's close friends in 1867. Brüll's first opera had been performed three years earlier.





In 1867 Brahms (age 34) was among the important figures with whom Popper and Auer associated in Vienna.

The famous coloratura, Adelina Patti.

"The great event of the winter season was naturally the Patti-concert, which had received much publicity, in a manner developed in the Southern American states (the Confederacy), and not at all in the spirit in which German art is usually presented. To most Germans the publicity is a brazen exhibition, and Frenchmen react with a shock, though the usage is well-known to Parisians . . .

"Miss Patti is herself from America, and received her artistic education and development there: now, the highly disapproved publicity . . . has made such headway that its general use meets with no objection in the great transatlantic States, and it is therefore understandable that our German sensibilities have very little effect on the famous singer, and that she finds compatible the excessive flattery of her artistic importance. But the only true pleasure could be gotten from the great and powerful playing of Vieuxtemps, and as his was the only worthwhile performance we were able to discover, we conclude that he should be heard in a more worthy circumstance . . ."

Such remarks did not hurt Ullman's several projects, because his tours met with great success, and his commercialization of art did not exploit either the artists or the public.

Among the artists whom Ullman managed in America were the pianists Henry Herz, Sigmund Thalberg, and Hans von Bülow. He also managed opera companies in the United States, and often imported singers from Europe.

His most featured artist was Carlotta Patti, the sister, and three years the senior, of the fabulous soprano Adelina Patti. Carlotta was born in Florence in 1840. Because of a leg injury in her childhood, she avoided the operatic stage. But she achieved wide popularity as a concert singer.

Ullmann's relationship with her began in New York in 1861, and his arrangement for her debut there. Carlotta was his pet "property" and because of her famous name, and her capabilities as a coloratura soprano, he built around her groups of well-known virtuosos for six-week tours. The other artists—including male singers—were changed intermittently, but Carlotta remained as the constant central attraction. Among the violinists who participated we find the names: Vieuxtemps, Wilhelmj, and Auer. The cellists included: Piatti, Grützmacher, and Popper, and the pianists, among other well-known names, Willmer, Jäel and Brassin.

The Ullmann phenomenon was a unique, busy and profitable venture, which met with success everywhere. The artists were engaged for six weeks at a time, touring, and performing three or four concerts each week. They received two hundred fifty gulden per week, including transportation.

In his book *From the Concert Hall,* a collection of articles published in

1870, Eduard Hanslick reports on the concert presented in Vienna—which was part of the tour of which Popper was a member—and gives quite a sympathetic account:

"Surprisingly, in spite of the very hot weather, the population of Vienna yesterday (September 11, 1867) listened to the profitable mechanical musical birds which had suddenly settled down in Ascher's Temple of Muses, and which were continuing to slowly unwind into the morning hours. The wandering rare birds appeared by the wisdom of their discoverer and leader, Ullmann, and are the chiming lark, Carlotta Patti, and Leopold Auer, David Popper, the pianists Rudolf Willmer and the baritone Jules Lefort. The truly surprising success of the Ullmann concerts, which this energetic concert manager has lately been proving, is (shown by the fact) that in spite of the beautiful season the house was sold out.

"The artists, arriving directly from Linz, Salzburg, Laibach, Graz, Pozsony, Pest, (and other cities in Austria-Hungary), have already collected 40,000 gulden. The tour further east—to Brünn, Lemberg, Olmütz, Troppau, Krakau, Czernowitz, etc.—promises to be similarly successful. Only such a clever combination (of artists) and administration make it possible. By this means, not only large cities, but small towns that for many years have had no chance to hear famous virtuosos, are included.

"For these pleasures, in the short run of a few weeks, the artists are well compensated and receive a notable income. This refers, naturally, to the commercialism of the arts, and not to the art itself. But when it is understood that the business interest of the traveling virtuoso is in the forefront, one must admit that the Ullmann system of a concert by groups is modern and practical. For Ullmann, the indefatigable worker, speculator, and organizer, the business is his meaning for living . . ."

According to Hanslick's report, the program of the Vienna Ullmann concert included the first and second movements of the *Trio in D minor* by Mendelssohn, a group of operatic arias sung by Carlotta Patti, and then a group of solos played by Popper: "Andante and Gavotte" by Tartini, "Adagio" by Molique, "Warum" and "Papillon" by Popper, ending with his transcription of "Du bist die Ruh" by Schubert. Next came a group of baritone solos, by Mr. Lefort, and Mr. Auer performed the "Ballade" and "Polonaise" by Vieuxtemps, "Andante" by Spohr, and "Capriccio" by Paganini. Mr. Willmer ended the program with a group of piano solos, and his own famous composition using "chain trills"—his specialty of technical bravura.

In his criticism of the concert, Hanslick points out:

Carlotta Patti achieved popularity as a concert singer.

Above: August Wilhelmj was among the violinists who participated in the Ullman concerts, with which Popper was associated. On the facing page: In 1868 Popper replaced Heinrich Röver in the Hellmesberger String Quartet. Hellmesberger Quartet: J. Hellmesberger and M. Dirst (violins); G. Heissler (viola); K. Schlesinger (cello).

". . . (in the group) there are two young artists who are without doubt the most important—Popper and Auer. The former is one of the most skillful cellists known. Recently he demonstrated the basis for his well-deserved reputation as a virtuoso with his very successful performance of one of the Goltermann *Concertos.* His beautiful singing tone was revealed in the 'Adagio' by Molique, and in an Etude—in his own composition called 'Papillon'—he proved his stamina and dexterity. The uninterrupted series of sixteenth notes reminded us of Paganini's 'Perpetuum Mobile'. . ."

Auer mentions that before the tour he discussed the venture with Brahms, who expressed some skepticism concerning the program. Probably his lack of enthusiasm is understandable because there was no Brahms on the program—only Beethoven and Mendelssohn, with light, entertaining music for the bulk of the fare.

As the tickets for the concerts were often sold out before the artists arrived, making it necessary to sometimes give two or three concerts in succession in the same town, when the artists disbanded in the middle of October, they no doubt had money saved in their pockets. Auer returned to Hamburg, to continue his tour with the Miller Brothers Quartet, and after that he left for St. Petersburg, to teach. Ullmann was ready to set off with a new touring group, built around Carlotta, this time to Scandinavia. He selected the outstanding artists Vieuxtemps, Grützmacher, and Jäel. Popper returned to Löwenberg for what would prove to be his final season of activities in that post.

Sophie Menter played with the Löwenberg orchestra on Dec. 22, and her success was described as follows:

"Sophie Menter, who appeared recently for the first time in Löwenberg with the court orchestra, made such a great impression with her performance of the Liszt *A major Concerto* that she was promptly engaged for the rest of the winter season."[3]

From the same journal, it is known that she played on four occasions in January—on the 1st, 5th, 12th, and 22nd. During the January concerts she performed, with the cellist Miss Lorch, pieces by Piatti and by Popper. Among her selections solo works by Liszt were featured, such as *Paraphrase of Midsummer Night's Dream* (Mendelssohn-Liszt), and *Paraphrase of The Prophet* (Meyerbeer-Liszt). Popper played the "Adagio" from his *D minor Concerto,* appearing jointly with Menter on one of the March concerts. Also, Menter and Popper performed trios on March 2nd and 9th with the guest soloist, Reményi.

There was a cloud over the Löwenberg orchestras when Popper returned after his tour with Ullmann. Ever since Berlioz's visit in 1863, the

Eduard Reményi appeared as guest soloist with Sophie Menter and David Popper who performed trios on March 2 and 9 in Löwenberg, 1869.

Prince had been confined to his wheelchair, and his health had been steadily declining. There was no assurance of perpetuating the orchestra without the support from the Prince, who had derived great personal satisfaction from promoting the music—his great love—but at the same time had been involved in the benevolent activity. The members of the orchestra began to talk openly of their future plans, in the event that the Prince should pass from the scene.

Although Seifritz was at the helm of the orchestra for the rest of its existence, he accepted five concert dates to conduct the St. Petersburg orchestra. Well-known throughout Germany, and respected by the musical world, he had no need for concern about his own future.

As far as we know, Popper's concert activities relaxed with the approach of the spring of 1868. It was not a bad year for the concert cellist, as we observe that Davidoff was in the midst of his biggest tour, all over Europe, with two appearances in Vienna—one playing Goltermann's *A minor Concerto* with the Philharmonic, and one a recital with the eminent Viennese pianist Epstein. The tour extended into Scandinavia and England. In view of later developments, it would seem that Popper was, at the same time, engaged in strategy aimed at his security for the future—and possibly, at the fulfillment of a long-felt wish.

Seven years earlier, with his young friend Mr. Wien, Popper had not been completely successful in launching his musical star in Vienna. But matters had surely improved for him as far as that city was concerned. Favorable press reports from near and far—particularly from the Viennese dean of critics, Hanslick—his great success in major German cities, and the acclaim gathered on his tour with the Ullmann group, placed him in an excellent position for the search of opportunity there. The popularity of his compositions added further lustre, and distinction. "The Holy City of Musicians" (as Brahms once called Vienna, in a letter to a friend) undoubtedly held attraction for him.

During his previous summer sojourn in Ischl, Popper had been in touch with many important musicians and personages from Vienna, and he must have thus acquired a number of influential contacts to the musical establishment in the city. Joseph Hellmesberger, member of a distinguished Viennese musical family, could not have failed to notice Popper's concert successes in Vienna, before and after the Ullmann concerts. He was an imposing figure in music, having become Conductor of the Friends of Music Concerts in 1851, at age twenty-two, and beginning in 1860 Concertmaster of the Imperial Opera—which post he now occupied. In 1849, at the age of twenty, he had assumed the leadership for the Hellmesberger Quartet, which had become a significant feature in the Viennese musical life.

An official announcement appeared in the papers in the month of May, that Popper was engaged to fill the vacancy as solo cellist in the Vienna Imperial Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra, and that he would replace Heinrich Röver in the Hellmesberger Quartet, beginning with the fall season of 1868.

These three new positions would necessarily push any involvement between Popper and Menter into the background (but not destroy the interest), and bring Popper's Löwenberg years full circle.

Between the end of the Löwenberg season, and the start of taking up new duties in a different musical atmosphere, we must presume that he could have done several things which filled this period of transition. There is no data available in Prague, or even an early arrival in Vienna. All are valid possibilities, and we can only conjecture his movements during that time. A plausible guess is that he spent some of the time at his favorite summer rest and recreation, with friends and colleagues at a reserved coffee-table in Bad Ischl, or Baden bei Wien.

His arrival in Vienna was much different from his arrival as an eighteen-year old cellist in Löwenberg seven years earlier. He could look back on those years with the earnest assumption that he fulfilled all the expectations on which the earlier engagement had been based. Older now, and recognized widely as one of the best artists in Europe, and a successful composer as well, his countenance reflected self-assurance, with eyes which expressed feelings both romantic and resolute. On his upper lip he wore a neat mustache, turned slightly downward at the ends—a somewhat modish alteration of the haunting youthful pallor he had impressed on observers in Prague, years before. This was his appearance when he came to take over the three important new posts, which may have seemed fulfillment of his hopes. For the time being all was well in the world for him.

He began his life in Vienna as the city was in the midst of a most interesting period in its political and cultural history.

[1]*NZfM* (Leipzig), September, 1866.
[2]Leopold Auer, *My Long Life in Music* (New York: F. Stokes & Co., 1923).
[3]*NZfM* (Leipzig), January 31, 1868.

Chapter IX

Vienna

The Ringstrasse in Vienna, built in the 1850's on the site of the old city walls.

In September, 1868, the city was undergoing a great transformation. An order from the Emperor Franz Joseph, in 1858, to demolish the ancient wall which surrounded the old city—built centuries earlier—had initiated a process of improvement and beautification. Because of its isolation within the wall from the sprawling outer section, the inner city was an anachronism in its role as an Imperial city.

After the political upheavals, which began in 1848, were quieted, the country began to prosper, and the economy was fairly well restored by the late fifties. In the state treasury, and in the hands of the "eighty families who ruled Austria " (according to Napoleon) and of the industrial aristocracy, there was enough money to finance a huge project. The plan, which would make possible a display of the eminence of an imperial city, mobilized countless architects and decorators, and thousands of craftsmen.

The moat around the old wall was filled, and the combined surfaces of the former moat and the demolished wall became an imposing boulevard, curving like a great horseshoe, with both ends terminating at the banks of the Danube Canal. In a little over a decade, this magnificant tree-lined Ringstrasse was completed, and grand architectural plans were taking shape, with massive buildings in baroque-renaissance style arising along

its way. The wave of construction of buildings and palaces began after Popper's arrival in the city, but the excitement and anticipation of beautiful things to come was in the air. The first edifice—the new Court Opera—was completed in 1869. It was followed by the Court Theatre, Art Museums, the buildings of Parliament, City Hall, the University, and the Royal Palace. Several other government departments, and elegant hotels, completed setting and stage upon which to display the power and the industrial prosperity of the monarchy to the native populace, and indeed to the world.

Parks laid out within the inner city, generously decorated with flowers, statues, fountains and small lakes, provided pastoral settings which contrasted with the adjacent busy avenues. Coffee houses of mirrored splendor supplied pleasant inexpensive luxury for the population. Small palaces with exquisite gardens clustered near the sumptuous Royal Palace.

Protecting the safety of all this solid grandeur were the police officers, groomed in impressive helmets, long swords, and spotless blue uniforms. Vehicle traffic was directed from prancing horses, or on foot, and was much diversified: horse-drawn trucks loaded with coal, beer barrels or other merchandise; two-horse fiacres—the taxies of those days—for traveling with privacy; one-horse carriages at less expense, for getting to places in a hurry; and the horse-drawn omnibus—which served as a street car for the public.

Very distinct from these middle-class forms of transportation, the uncommon sight on the Vienna boulevards was the shiny lacquered equipage drawn by equally shiny horses, with high-riding coachman and footman, in livery. Such carriages belonged to the industrial elite or to nobility at various levels—from Barons and Counts up to Princes and Archdukes. Outshining all was the ultimate elegance of the Emperor's coach.

The military establishment was evident throughout the city, and elsewhere. Elegant military officers appeared promenading on sidewalks or riding in coaches—reminders of the force which held the Empire's heterogeneous population under control.

In a period from about 1830 to 1850, the public taste in music had sunk to a sentimental superficiality. The classical heritage of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert had been nurtured at a very leisurely pace. But with the enhancement of the city there came a reaction, and a resurgence of cultural impetus. As the world at large developed a realization of the importance of Vienna's great musical treasures, the city found new enthusiasm for them. This cultural expansion saw Vienna asserting her musical rights, and increasingly involved in important musical activity,

at the highest level. Eduard Hanslick both contributed to the musical awakening with his keen analytical criticism and his activities as teacher of music history and esthetics at the University, and described and defined the phenomenon as the "Golden Age of Music." The Music Society building, near the St. Charles' Church, housed many musical activities and interests—Philharmonic Concerts, choral societies, music festivals—and became the scene of many historical events. Brahms had his dwelling nearby.

The enjoyment of music is a social function among the Viennese. In spite of the rich heritage of symphonies and string-quartets, which find their natural habitat in Vienna, there was an even much greater number of music lovers who were drawn to grand opera. This form of musical entertainment, combining branches of the arts—drama, poetry, acting, design, vocal and orchestral music—fuses them all into a whole. The love of opera and operetta had always been a natural part of the Viennese temperament. The world of romantic dreams—with whipped cream and Strauss waltzes shaping an environment to fit its own pleasurable image—delighted in pretense and imagination and expanded to revel in an emotional involvement with romantic operas, Wagnerian heroic sagas, epic conflicts, murders from Italian folk-tales. Everyone could find some personal identification in such diversification, but all the tensions could be easily resolved by means of drama and music, and the spirit comfortably return to the undisturbed fantasy-life of the Viennese.

The Kärtnertor Theatre was old and full of memories. It had nestled near the Kärtnertor (Kärtner Gate) in the Viennese wall, since 1708. After a fire it was rebuilt in 1762, active as the Court Theatre and Opera House, even after the wall was demolished, and for a short period following the opening of the stately new Court Opera House on the Ringstrasse, in 1869. It was in the Kärtnertor Theatre that Popper began his role as solo cellist with the Opera.

In 1814 Beethoven had conducted a revival of his *Fidelio* here, and on May 7, 1824, the premiere of his *Ninth Symphony.* Schubert had later been offered an opportunity to take over the orchestra at the Kärtnertor Theatre, but declined because of his "reluctance to submit to the abuse by prima-donnas . . ." In 1840, Piatti had appeared here as guest soloist, playing a Romberg *Concerto.* Gluck, Rossini and Weber were among those who had directed their own works and had their works performed under the staff conductors. In the course of the venerable history of the theatre, the cellist Max Willman from Bonn gave a concert here in 1785, and during his concert there was an interruption during which the opera *L'Isola Disabitata* by Haydn was performed.

The repertoire of the Kärtnertor Theatre Opera House included varied

Bernard Romberg. A Romberg Concerto was performed in 1840 at Vienna's Kärtnertor Theatre by guest soloist, Alfred Piatti, Italian cellist and composer.

works representative of Italian, German and French operas of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1858 Wagner was added, with a performance of *Lohengrin,* and this was followed by *Tannhäuser* and *The Flying Dutchman. Mastersingers* and *Rienzi* did not become part of the repertoire until 1871, after the advent of the new opera house. During the last ten years of the Kärtnertor Theatre at least one opera by Wagner was performed each week.

Popper played under the following very able conductors: Chief Court Conductor Otto Dessoff (who for fifteen years was also the Director of the Philharmonic), and his conducting staff who shared the responsibility—Ignaz Fischer, Heinrich Proch, and Court Conductor Heinrich Esser. Under the patronage of the Emperor the superintendent (*Intendant*) of the organization was Baron Franz von Dingelstedt. The philosophy which he proclaimed was that an employee of a state institution, such as the Opera, must not breach the royal etiquette by resigning, but could be only dismissed, fired, or permitted to leave. He does not leave the impression that he himself was a music enthusiast. Even so, under his administration, the concerts and the operas never ceased to lure the Viennese public.

As Popper assumed his seat in the orchestra in the fall of 1868, the comparison he was able to make with the concert hall at the Löwenberg Palace must have impressed him. Where he was accustomed to an intimate enclosure, holding about five hundred people, the imposing Kärtnertor Theatre held altogether over fifteen hundred, with three hundred sixty-two seats, seventy-two boxes, more seats on the upper levels, and standing room. There were approximately ninety musicians in the orchestra.

As we trace the predecessors of Popper back into the eighteenth century, we find that a godson of Haydn—Josef Weigl—was solo cellist from 1769-1792. During his last ten years, four of Mozart's great operas were performed for the first time: *Elopement from the Seraglio, Marriage of Figaro, Cosi fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni* (in its first Vienna performance). Weigl, who was twenty-eight when he started, was the youngest cellist before Popper to hold the position.

Phillip Schildlöcker was solo cellist from 1795 to 1809. He was an older man—fifty-three when he started—and a well-known teacher. Nicolaus Krafft who followed him, at the age of thirty-one, was the son of Anton Krafft who had been the cellist in Haydn's orchestra at Eisenstadt. He had been born there, and had studied in Berlin with Duport. Next in the list, Joseph Merk, age thirty-two, held the post from 1811 to 1831. He was Vienna-born, a pupil of Schildlöcker, and was himself a very important teacher at the Vienna Conservatory for twenty-seven

years. Joseph Linke took the position when he was forty-eight, holding it from 1831 to 1837; he was also a renowned chamber music player. Thirty-six at the beginning of his tenure, Aegid Borzage was there from 1837 to his death in 1858. This long span of activity was shared by Joseph Merk, who returned to carry part of the responsibility from 1847 to 1852.

As previously mentioned, the first performance of the Volkmann *Cello Concerto* was played by Karl Schlesinger in 1857 with the Vienna Philharmonic. This was seven years before Popper introduced it again with the Bülow concerts. Schlesinger became solo cellist with the Opera the very next year, at age forty-five, and was there for the nine years (1858-1867) just preceding Popper. In 1862 he was appointed to the faculty of the Vienna Conservatory, and like Linke, was identified with important groups of chamber music players.

Popper was twenty-five when he became solo cellist at the Opera—the youngest who had ever been engaged. Practically all of the above named cellists had composed small works and concertos, but Popper's music was probably the best known.

In addition to composition, all these cellists had been active in string quartet playing, teaching, and, to a limited degree, in occasional solo appearances. Participation in these fields was always artistically challenging, but there were financial incentives as well.

The Opera Orchestra salaries, though not meager, were not bountiful. In 1865 the violin "concertmaster" received 120 gulden per month, and a conductor between 175 and 200 gulden per month. On this basis we can reasonably suppose that Popper's pay was somewhere between 80 and 100 gulden per month—especially as he was very soon distinguished with "concertmaster" title. (It is not certain if an honorarium was, or was not, attached to a title, but, if only for the prestige, the titles "court musician," "court virtuoso," and "concertmaster" were much appreciated). It was desirable to find some additional source of income. The Opera Orchestra did double duty as the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra—in which role it was a self-supporting institution. Naturally, its subscription series of eight concerts per season provided some additional security for the players, above the opera salaries, though that would have been limited because of the expenses involved for the organization.

The work was arduous. During a season of ten months, the Opera gave approximately two hundred twenty-five performances—almost every evening—and rehearsed from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily. In addition, there were rehearsals of the Philharmonic Orchestra repertoire, and that series of Sunday afternoon concerts. And, in Popper's case, another series of eight concerts with the Hellmesberger Quartet—and some out of town, or in

In 1869 the very popular musician Johann Herbeck was engaged by Dingelstedt to the staff of the Vienna Opera Orchestra. Herbeck became Director of the Court Opera at the end of 1870.

nearby countries—with all the indicated rehearsals. So the Vienna period of Popper's life was one in which he spent his youthful energy rapidly, and in great quantities.

As the season began, the talk of the town was concentrated on the new opera house, then under construction. As Intendant, the initial concern of Dingelstedt was to facilitate the smooth transition a year hence from the Kärtnertor Theatre into the splendid new Court Opera House on the Ringstrasse. Not long after this was accomplished, he was to relinquish control of the opera, and assume administration of the Burg Theatre. He was a capable pianist, and his wife, Jenny Lutzer, a famous opera singer, but he was skeptical concerning music in the theatre, or public domain. In a letter to his brother, Liszt once quoted Dingelstedt as saying: ". . . concerts are superfluous, and operas are a necessary evil . . ." He was experienced in matters of the theatre, and very capable as to production and discipline.

As the time was approaching for two of the conductors to retire, in 1869 Dingelstedt engaged the very popular musician Johann Herbeck to the staff of the new Opera; it was Herbeck who became Director of the Court Opera at the end of 1870 when Dingelstedt stepped aside. He also became the first of the conductor-directors in the history of the Opera.

In the fall of 1868, the Viennese musical community first heard Popper, in September, as solo cellist of the Opera, at Kärtnertor Theatre. Then, in early November, he played the initial concert of the Philharmonic subscription season, in the large concert hall of the Music Society building.

On November 15, in the chamber music hall of the Music Society, he was introduced as one of the three new members of the quartet led by Joseph Hellmesberger, (one of the concertmasters of the Opera) who had maintained an active and admired group since its founding in 1849. The new members, other than Popper, were Adolph Brodsky, second violin, and Sigismund Bachrich, viola. Two other musicians performed—the pianist Schenner, in the *Trio* (Op. 70#1), by Beethoven, and W. Nigg, playing second viola in Beethoven's *String Quintet.* The program opened with the *G. Major Quartet* by Haydn. The criticism not only praised the performance, but commented very favorably on the changes made in the personnel, stating that the quality had been significantly raised. "Herr Popper, who is known in other lands, is one of the newly engaged members. He surpasses his predecessors in many aspects. The same is true of the other new members . . ."[1]

On Dec. 3, 1868, on the third concert of the season, Popper played the Volkmann *Concerto* with the Philharmonic, Heinrich Esser conducting. The program opened with *B minor Symphony* by Esser. The criticism emphasized Popper's poetic conception and the "astonishing technique," and admired Volkmann's "impressive individuality and his knowledge of the technical side of the instrument." This reaction was quite different from that of the Berlin critics, five years before, when the *Concerto* had to many seemed unintelligible. The final comment of the critic might have created some discomfiture for Popper in relation to his new colleagues in Vienna, causing an awkward situation between other Viennese cellists and the critic, and exposing Popper to the jealousy of the local cello fraternity, when he wrote:

". . . Vienna has had, until now, no cellists to boast about, and none who were received with such enthusiasm (as Popper), other than some foreign artists who appeared on transitory occasions. Vienna can congratulate itself for the recent acquisition of the artist . . ."[2]

In his collected writings Hanslick, who had heard Davidoff for the first time in April, 1868, reinforced the above criticism after Popper's performance of the Volkmann *Concerto,* with the following appraisal of the artists:

". . . The violoncello has produced only two outstanding virtuosos, both foreign-born—Davidoff from St. Petersburg, and Popper from Prague . . ."[3]

Popper's Vienna period thus began with a degree of praise which was not altogether conducive to his making friends among his colleagues. Fortunately, no serious antagonisms developed, as far as we know.

The new Opera house (Hofoper) opened May 25, 1869, with a performance of *Don Giovanni* conducted by Heinrich Proch. The festivities were brilliant, with the Emperor and his guests, and all the nobility, providing unusual luster among the packed house (with its capacity of two thousand three hundred forty-seven).

As Edison did not invent the electric light until 1879, this elegant new theatre was illuminated by eight thousand gas jets giving off a great amount of heat which, enclosed with all these people, made for a very warm event. The gas was replaced by electricity in 1887.

(At this point, the writer would like to mention that at no time did he ever see Popper using glasses to read music or newspapers).

The Opera building, in Renaissance style, was an imposing edifice occupying a large block on the Ringstrasse at the intersection of the Kärtnerstrasse, one of the busiest thoroughfares in the city. Inside, it was lavishly decorated with frescos depicting scenes from *The Magic Flute.* Rebuilt after damage in the second world war, in 1955, it is still standing, as important as ever to the city.

The opera season ended in July, and Popper would usually take off for one of his favorite summering places such as Bad Ischl, Baden, or Puchberg, for rest and composing.

The move from the old Kärtnertor Theatre to the new building had taken considerable time, because of the many items to be transferred—scenery, library, props, costumes, and much other equipment. During the transition period, performances were given alternately, in either of the two houses. The final performance in the old theatre was given on April 17, 1870—one and a half years after Popper's first performance as solo cellist with the opera—with Rossini's *William Tell.*

As the lights were dimmed that evening, the atmosphere in the theatre was already charged with emotion. Popper began the opening measures of the overture alone. The deep, penetrating resonance of his instrument reverberated from the old walls with the ascending arpeggio. It seemed like an echo of the past, ten years earlier in Prague, when he was still a student. He could feel the historical significance of this occasion, both personally, and for the Opera, and the music lovers of Vienna. With the accompaniment from the rest of the cello section he launched upon the famous solo, which anticipates the drama to be enacted on the stage. The serious, nostalgic music fitted the situation, and according to old reports, there were few dry eyes left in the audience that evening.

This was farewell to a vanishing chapter in musical history, and a

tribute to those great names which had been associated with the old Kärtnertor Theatre, such as Gluck, Weber, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Rossini, Verdi and Wagner.

At the opening of the fall season of 1869, the news reached Popper of the death of Prince Constantine Hohenzollern-Hechingen. The passing of the Prince touched him deeply. He recalled his seven years at Löwenberg, during which the Prince's generosity had helped him to ascend from obscurity, and he had been allowed to leave his post for occasional concert opportunities elsewhere. As had been anticipated, the Löwenberg orchestra was disbanded because there was no provision made to perpetuate it after the Prince's death. In an issue of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* the public was informed that a "weak substitute" orchestra (probably self-supporting) had been founded by Herr Dolt, employing former members who chose to remain in Löwenberg. Seifritz took over as director of the Breslau orchestra from Leopold Damrosch, who departed for New York. Seifritz was later engaged to direct the Stuttgart orchestra. Over four decades of significant music making by the Löwenberg orchestra, begun by the Prince in Hechingen in 1826, thus came to an end.

In 1870 the Volkmann *Concerto* began to be played more frequently by concert cellists, and within a decade it would be established as part of the repertoire of every virtuoso. Popper performed it once more in Vienna, this time with the Singakademie orchestra, under conductor Weinberg, on December 11, 1869.

On the 19th of the same month he appeared on a trio concert with Clara Schumann and the violinist Jacob Grün. The latter had been appointed concertmaster of the Court Opera at the same time that Popper had joined the ranks. Clara Schumann was at the peak of her popularity, and in her fiftieth year. Her reputation as an artist was unsurpassed. For the two string players, both of whom were young men (Popper twenty-six and Grün thirty-two), it was an impressive privilege to make music with the widow of the great master of Romanticism, Robert Schumann. Appropriately, the *D minor Trio* by Schumann was on the program.

Popper was known as one of the first cellists who was active in introducing new works. On April 4, 1871 he performed a recently written cello concerto by Karl Eckert in Prague. Popper was very warmly received by the critic, but the Eckert *Concerto* was not too well liked:

". . . We had the opportunity to once again hear the former pupil of the Institute, David Popper from Wien, after a long absence from Prague. Herr Popper combines an accurate and astounding technique with a big tone—which filled the rather inadequate acoustics of the theater. In the delicate cantilenas—especially in the elegiac moments—the splendid

instrument literally sang. He played the new *Concerto* by Eckert, which throughout the first movement is maintained on a noble level. In the last movement a remarkable triviality is shown . . . an insignificant theme "à la Cossack" is displayed by all possible means—piccolo, triangle, big drum and cymbals. To the listener . . . this brass display, as opposed to the first part, was like a fist-punch in the eyes . . . The *Andante Maestoso* from his (Popper's) *D minor Concerto* made us sorry that we were not acquainted with the other movements. Well-deserved praise was earned by the amiable artist . . ."

Popper performed the Eckert *Concerto* soon again, on April 30, 1871, in Vienna, on a solo recital with the pianist Door. On the same program were the Corelli *Sonata* and the Servais *Concerto.* Anton Door, born in 1833, had been a pupil of Czerny. He had succeeded Nicolas Rubinstein as professor of Moscow, in 1859, but returned to the Vienna Conservatory in 1869. After 1871 Popper played several recitals with him, and also some chamber music and sonata programs.

During his frequent contact with Wagner's music, Popper was intrigued by the cello parts in the opera scores. He studied and prepared the parts for the cello section. The intricate and unusual work was a challenge to orchestra players, and it was his responsibility to suggest bowings and fingerings in preparation for rehearsal and performance. When he later wrote his studies for the cello, this involvement with Wagner's opera cello parts led him to write several special ones which were inspired by the difficult Wagnerian figurations and passages. The great forty etudes, designed to build a cello technique adapted to modern demands, were published during the years from 1901-1905, under the title *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels.*

The occasional presence of Wagner during those years brought Popper into contact with him in various roles. Several situations should be recorded here, because these early associations with Wagner, and their influence upon him, remained with Popper till the end of his life—even though there were incidents of unpredictable behavior on Wagner's part.

Wagner respected Popper's musicianship. When Popper's widow was sorting out papers after his death, she showed a letter from Wagner to Popper, to Miklós Zsámboki, in which Wagner had expressed his wish that Popper would play the solo parts in the forthcoming first performances of his operas in Stuttgart, Köln, and Dresden, saying: ". . . My Popper must play the solo . . ." We don't know if this wish was carried out, or if it created any serious repercussions with the capable solo cellists in those cities. Perhaps it was a sign of recognition on Wagner's part that Popper had made a special effort to understand his music, and had unique capacity as a solo cellist.

Above: Karl Eckert's new Concerto was performed by Popper on April 4, 1871 in Prague. Popper was known as one of the first cellists who was active in introducing new works. Below: Jacob Grun, violinist, appeared (December 19, 1870) at the Vienna Court Opera during a trio concert (Robert Schumann's D minor Trio*) with Popper and Clara Schumann. Grun became concertmaster of the Court Opera in 1868.*

Many organizations and individuals were interested in, and supported, Wagner's project of building the Bayreuth Theatre. Artists frequently donated the income from concerts given for the benefit of the Wagnerian fund. In 1874, enroute to another engagement, Popper stopped at a somewhat inconvenient time—due to a train schedule—to deliver to Wagner at Bayreuth the proceeds from a concert he had performed for the benefit of the fund.

Popper entered Wagner's home and asked to be announced to the Master's presence. Wagner, obviously in deep concentration, was annoyed at having someone visit him at such an early hour. He rushed out of his study in his quaint robe, very bothered, and without a glance at his visitor, exclaimed: "So, here I am now—Richard Wagner—this is the way I look in the front and (turning around) this way from the back!" With this he started to go back to his work. Popper, surprised, called out quickly, "Master, but I bring money from Wien. I am Popper." Wagner wheeled around, on his face the friendliest expression, and said in his high-pitched voice (and typical Saxonian dialect, pronouncing "B" for "P"), "Hey! Money and Bopper? Come fast to my breast and listen to my heart palpitate (in German 'Boppen'). Come back a little later, bring the money, and we'll have breakfast together." With this he disappeared again.

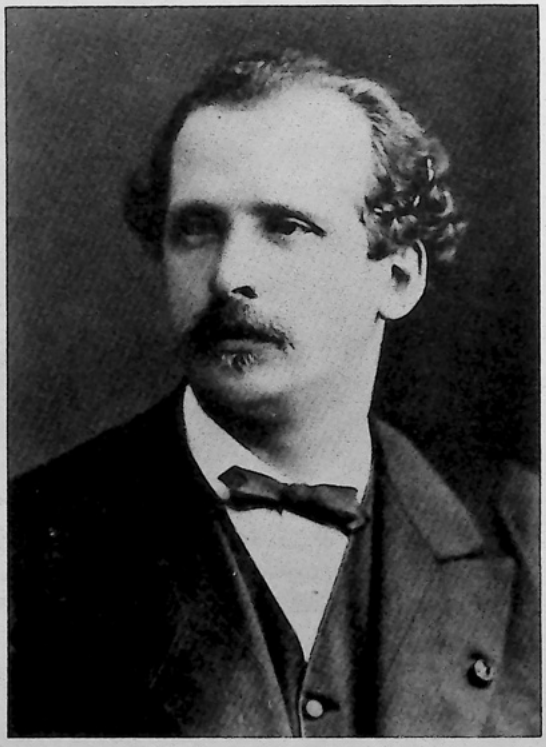
Occasionally Popper was a dinner guest at Wagner's house in Wahnfried. One evening during dinner the subject of Brahms' music arose. Popper was quite aware that this was a sensitive matter, but because of his sincere esteem for Brahms he could not avoid contradicting Wagner with the remark that Brahms possessed very significant qualities bordering on genius.

Following this incident, Popper was not again invited to Wagner's house—possibly he had offended Cosima Wagner with his praise of Brahms. Nevertheless, Popper's loyalty and admiration were never dimmed. In the studio at his home, near the death-mask of Beethoven on the wall over the piano, there hung a large bas-relief of Wagner.

Popper transcribed Wagner's piano solo, "Albumblatt" for cello with piano or orchestra accompaniment. The transcription was published in 1874, and dedicated to Countess Maria Dönhof—who had been born Princess Camporeale of Sicily. In a letter, Liszt wrote about a concert in Munich on which Popper played it for the first time, and at which she was present. In 1870 Bülow, with whom she studied, described the Countess as one who had ". . . great passion, and talent for music . . . a marvel, dainty, beautiful, nineteen years old . . ." The publication bears the title 'Albumblatt" under which the expression "Als Romanze" appears just above the dedication. On this same program of which Liszt

During a concert in Munich, Rafael Joseffy performed two piano solos and Madame Sophie Menter-Popper, accompanied by Liszt, played Liszt's transcription of The Ride of the Valkyries *by Wagner.*

Above: Pianist Anton Door, with whom Popper gave a solo recital in Vienna on April 30, 1871. Below: Nicolas Rubinstein was succeeded by Door as professor at the Moscow Conservatory, 1859.



wrote, Joseffy performed two piano solos, and Madame Sophie Menter-Popper, accompanied by Liszt, played Liszt's transcription of "The Ride of the Valkyries" by Wagner.

The Vienna Philharmonic has well deserved its place as one of the great orchestras of the world. Its rich, warm tone quality has nowhere been surpassed.

In 1842, when the Imperial Court Opera Orchestra organized symphony concerts, the separate institution which resulted acquired certain democratic rights for its members. The self-esteem of the players was raised considerably, as they were lifted from the dark pit of the theatre onto the stage and into the spotlight.

The first concert of the Philharmonic was given under the direction of Otto Nicolai[4] on Easter Sunday, March 28, 1842. So as not to interfere with social or family plans for the day, the performance began at 12:30 p.m. As was to continue to be the case throughout the history of the Philharmonic, Beethoven was well represented. On the first concert were Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony. Leonore Overture No. 3,* an aria from *Fidelio,* and the *Overture* "Consecration of the House." There was also a duo for voices by Cherubini, and "La Romanesca," a sixteenth century melody, played by the cellist François Servais.

The system of quasi-self-government allowed each member of the Philharmonic to express his preference as to the choice of conductor and of program.

Bruckner's symphonies were slow to gain acceptance in his hometown, Vienna. But his Second Symphony was even rejected, at the first rehearsal in 1872, by the orchestra members, who had the privilege to accept or refuse planned performances of works which did not meet their approval, when tried.

Popper, who was possibly more progressive than his colleagues, (or more understanding toward another composer), stood up and pleaded that the orchestra try again, in order to be fair before totally rejecting the work. Popper's persuading words proved effective, and the Bruckner piece was accepted as a part of the Philharmonic repertoire. By the time of its first performance, on October 26, 1873, Popper had already left the orchestra.

The superb musicianship and virtuosity of Joseph Hellmesberger contributed to the sound and excellence of the Philharmonic, and also assured the success of his quartet organization, which existed without interruption for thirty-eight years. His taste was progressive, and he showed much interest in the works of contemporary composers. Nonetheless, the cultivation of Beethoven's chamber music took priority on his programs.

Otto Nicolai, composer of the opera Merry Wives of Windsor *and conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic.*

In 1862, Hellmesberger was responsible for the first performance of the *Piano Quartet* G. mi. (Op. 25), by the then little-known Brahms, at the time that Brahms first visited Vienna. It was performed with great success. This performance contributed to Brahms' decision to settle permanently in Vienna, a few years later.

At the time that Popper took his place in the quartet, in 1868, his predecessor was Heinrich Röver, who subsequently became a member of the opera orchestra, and later solo cellist. The cellists preceding Röver had been Schlessinger, followed by Borzaga—who died in 1858—and Cossman, who was called from Weimar for a few concerts, just before the young Röver took the place.

The Quartet concerts were given on Sundays, two weeks apart, and there were eight in a season. We know the programs for thirty-two of the concerts which were given during Popper's years of association with the group. One is impressed by the rich representation of the classics, among which Beethoven's works were the most often performed.

On Feb. 28, 1869 Sophie Menter, Hellmesberger and Popper played the *Trio in C minor* (Op. 1 No. 1), by Beethoven, and on the program of Dec. 19th in the same year, the pianist Epstein and Popper performed Sonata for Piano and Cello in D major (Op. 102), also by Beethoven. Other pianists of importance participated in chamber works on the programs.

There were frequent performances of works by young aspiring composers, who appreciated the opportunity to be presented by this prominent organization.

Brahms' name was absent on the programs during these years. He did not yet feel that his string quartets were ready for publication, and they were not released until 1873. On November 18, 1875, four years after Popper left the Hellmesberger Quartet, he was invited to participate with Hellmesberger and Bachrich in a performance of the *C minor Piano Quartet* by Brahms, with the composer at the piano.

Contemporary critics praised Hellmesberger as ". . . distinguished for fine tone, for graceful wit. Popper's own style of performance, and his own sense of humor matched perfectly with Hellmesberger, and a fine blending between the two artists was attained both in companionship and music."

Before we take our attention from Popper's four years with the Hellmesberger Quartet, some mention should be given to the position of the second violinist. During that period there were three second violinists: Adolph Brodsky, for the first season; D. Krancsevics, in the fall of 1869; and Joseph Hellmesberger, Jr., the son of the leader, took the post in 1870. The latter remained in the quartet, and he himself became the leader when his father stepped down, in 1887.

By nature of the quartet scores, the first violinist is the leader of the group. It is difficult for a first violinist to find an alter ego who can fill the role of second violinist both as instrumentalist and as musician, blend with the tone and style of the leader, and yet is temperamentally flexible

On the program of the first concert of the Vienna Philharmonic (March 28, 1842) was La Romanesca, *a sixteenth century melody played by the cellist François Servais.*

and able to cooperate. Young and ambitious violinists may be willing to subject themselves to such frustration for a time, accepting the experience as a stepping stone until they can lead their own chamber music group.

Both Brodsky and Krancsevics became leaders of their own quartets. The former concertized for a few years, and in 1875 he became the conductor in Kiev. Tchaikovsky dedicated his Violin Concerto to him (after Auer had described it as unplayable and refused to play it). Brodsky first performed it in Vienna, in 1882. After that date he became a member of the faculty at the Leipzig Conservatory, and organized a notable "Brodsky" quartet, with Klengel as cellist. Krancsevics was very successful as well, with a quartet he organized in Vienna.

In the spring of 1872 Popper and Sophie Menter decided to be married. The wedding was in June. Popper was twenty-nine and Menter twenty-six.

This was a serious step for Popper, as his concert activities were very limited by his Vienna orchestral positions, and as Sophie's concerts took her far and wide for long periods.

The year 1872-73 was naturally one of stress for the new marriage. During that time, Popper's name no longer appears on the Hellmesberger programs, and it is therefore evident that he left the quartet during this first year of his marriage. But the steady routine of orchestra playing which made tour plans impossible, the lack of freedom to play concerts and of energy for composing, and the many separations imposed on his married existence left him apprehensive.

The idea of giving up the secure positions as solo cellist was disturbing. After the first season he tried to arrange a compromise with the Opera administration. He requested a three-month leave of absence during the season 1873-74, which time he would use for a concert tour (hopefully with Menter). This request was denied.

Between the two of them there seemed to be enough concert engagements and opportunities—together and separately—for him to risk breaking away from the Vienna commitments, and launch himself again into the concert life. He terminated his contracts with the Vienna Opera and the Vienna Philharmonic at the end of the spring season in 1873.

On one occasion when the writer asked Popper about his years in Vienna, he responded with a sigh, saying "Those were the hardest years of my life!"

[1]*NZfM* (Leipzig), November 22, 1868.
[2]Herman Starcke, *NZfM* (Leipzig), December 6, 1868.
[3]Eduard Hanslick, *Geschichte des Concertwesen in Wien.*
[4]Composer of the opera *Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Chapter X

Menter

The beautiful Sophie Menter (1872) whose path crossed David Popper's heart and career for more than fourteen years.

During the years that Popper was solo cellist in the Vienna Opera, Sophie Menter was gathering triumph after triumph in many concert appearances in Europe. In Vienna she was very successful.

In February, 1868, she performed three concertos with the Vienna Philharmonic: The Liszt E flat Major, the Beethoven B flat Major, and the Mendelssohn. As an ardent Liszt disciple, she played his *E flat Concerto* almost everywhere she appeared, even at a time when it was not yet readily accepted by the critics and the public.

Twelve years earlier a former Liszt pupil had performed the Concerto in Vienna, and it had met with disaster: the critic Hanslick had expressed strong dislike for the work. But in Sophie's performance, both composition and virtuoso met with much success.

Sophie Menter was born in Munich in 1846. Joseph Menter, her father, was a very prominent artist and teacher of the violoncello. As mentioned earlier, he had begun his professional career at the Hechingen Court Orchestra, from 1829-1833.

Those who knew young Sophie described her as intellectually ahead of her years. Her father died when she was only eight years old. She quickly developed into a resolute and ambitious person. When she was fifteen, her pianistic and musical talents were displayed in a debut recital in

Munich, with remarkable success. Four years later, with a brilliant concert in Frankfurt, her future was assured, and many offers for appearances followed.

She studied with, in addition to Lebert, both Tausig and Bülow, who were outstanding representatives of the Liszt school of piano playing. Through these latter two artists she succeeded in joining the magic circle of Liszt's piano pupils in 1869.

Liszt was unrestrained in expressing great praise and warm affection for her, and for her talent. When he sent to her his *Fantasia on The Huguenots,* in 1880, he said ". . . Pieces of this sort ought to be performed by only super-eminent virtuosos—namely, Sophie Menter, for instance . . ." In 1881 Liszt wrote to his friend Nvrati, concerning Menter: ". . . for many years past (I have) regarded her as the most brilliant and accomplished of the lady pianists of the day . . ."

Menter owned a castle in the Tyrol near the end of Liszt's life, and the very last letter in Liszt's handwriting was to Menter, as follows: ". . . How delightful it would be to me, dear friend, to visit you at your fairy castle of Itter. But I do not see any opportunity of doing it at present. Perhaps you will come to Bayreuth, where from the 20th of July to the 7th of August, I will be staying . . ." This was written on July 3, 1886; Liszt died on July 31st.

Wise old Liszt, when first he heard of the impending marriage between Popper and Menter, remarked with intuitive insight, "Un marriage concertant!" ("Concertant"—a form of composition, a display of individual bravura between soloists—actually a competing display). It did prove to be such, for fourteen years!

Before their marriage they made a short concert tour together. But after the contracts with the Opera and the Philharmonic were ended, in 1873, they were free to embark on more comprehensive joint concert activities.

In February, 1872, Sophie Menter was recuperating from an illness, in Nice on the French Riviera, and preparing for her performance of the Schumann Concerto with the Vienna Philharmonic, which would take place in March. Popper was still with the Philharmonic, and it had become no secret that their marriage would take place in June of that year. This did not prevent them from making a short tour in Bukovina (eastern Poland).

Combining their forces in partnership was logical, in a period when it was customary for a soloist to appear with a co-artist anyway. Later, the combination of Menter-Popper in concerts became a financial advantage, by keeping the fees in the family. It was their hope that their assorted individual engagements, which both had to frequently undertake, would

not cause separations from each other which were excessive in time or distance. At the beginning all was harmonious, but as the popularity of each gained momentum, they would find themselves separated by hundreds of miles, across the continent. These periodic breaks created a strain between them, because the single successes nourished their already well-developed egos. The admiration from the public was hard to share.

In April of 1872—before their marriage—they toured together with great success. In the city of Lemberg, following their concert, they received a note of congratulation from Karl Mikuli (1821-1897). This would not in itself seem unusual, but the circumstances suggested in the correspondence deserve some mention.[1]

Between the years 1873 and 1879 there were many concerts by the artist pair, both joint and separate. Menter toured Holland and Germany, and even contemplated a tour in North America—this was postponed until several years later. She also appeared with other cellists in chamber music concerts. Together, they played in many cities, such as Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Leipzig, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Riga. It was not unusual for them to perform two, three, or four recitals in the same town.[2]

In 1874 Popper played a trio concert in Vienna with the pianist Door, and violinist Wirth. On this program Popper and Door performed the *Sonata in E minor for Piano and Cello* (Op. 38) by Brahms. It is not certain that this was its first public performance in Vienna, but the enthusiastic comments from Hanslick strongly suggest this possibility:

"Herr Door and Popper gave an extraordinarily successful performance of Brahms' Sonata for piano and cello (Op. 38). We are very grateful to these artists for letting us have the opportunity to get acquainted with this masterpiece."

This Vienna concert may have been played in the Bösendorfer Hall. It is certain that the first joint recital of Popper and Menter took place in that hall, on March 17, 1874. The Viennese music lovers, and the countless artists who played there, developed a deep sentimental attachment to this concert hall during the forty years of its existence.

Only those virtuosos who were certain of drawing large audiences gave concerts in the medium-sized hall in the Music Society Building, built in 1869. (The large hall was reserved for use of orchestra and chorus, and there was no small hall). Those artists who preferred a small intimate atmosphere, and wished to save overhead expenses, would choose one of the three piano manufacturer's saals. These were not far from the center of the city, and were less formal in nature. They would seat four or five hundred people.

The most popular of these halls (and the one having the finest acoustics, when about two-thirds full) was the new Bösendorfer Saal. The firm had been founded by Ignaz Bösendorfer in 1828, and his son Ludwig had so greatly improved the instruments that the concert grands were of such perfection that they were selected by Liszt and Rubinstein for use on their concert tours. Bösendorfer pianos merited first prize awards at three world exhibitions—in London, Paris, and Vienna.

During the existence of the Bösendorfer Hall, from 1872 till 1913, about forty-five hundred recitals were given there by important artists. The debut of practically every artist took place in this hall. Eventually it acquired the nature of a shrine, to which the Viennese music lovers were deeply dedicated.

In 1913, when it was learned that the building, owned by Prince Lichtenstein, and of which the Bösendorfer Hall was a part, was to be demolished and replaced by an office building, there was widespread disappointment. The last concert was held there on May 2, 1913, with Vienna's foremost string quartet—the Rosé—who performed, among other numbers, Beethoven's *Quartet* (Op. 135). The finale movement, which Beethoven had entitled "Der schwer gefasste Entschluss" (The Difficult Resolve), opens with a melancholy declaration of the motto theme "Must it be?—It must be!" The audience departed in silence, in a somber mood, as though from a funeral oration.

The news of the demolition of the famous concert hall appeared in every European newspaper. During a session in class at that time Popper mentioned to us that he had been, in 1874, one of the earlier artists to perform in the hall, and that he had also played there many times later on.

During his travels Popper had used Herrengasse 6—the street number of the Bösendorfer firm—as his address for his mail, and the offices of Bösendorfer took good care of his letters for many years. As did many of his colleagues, he had a sentimental attachment to the place.

The Poppers maintained their residence in Vienna on the Ringstrasse near the Schwarzenberg Platz. Occasionally, they undertook separate engagements, and Popper could sometimes thus enjoy the solitude without cats running underfoot.

It was no secret that Sophie lavished her affection generously on cats, and she was known among musical friends—including Liszt—as an ardent cat lover. Traveling with several cats is an unusual responsibility, but living with them in an apartment is no less so.

The Popper-Menter affiliation, professional as well as in marriage, seems to have been the attraction of contrasting characteristics and personalities. On the surface, the images ideally complement each other.

She had a piquant pretty face with a charming nose, luscious tresses of light brunette hair crowning her head; he was a handsome figure with a shock of dark thick hair, and a slightly fragile appearance which was belied by an expression of great confidence and of ready humor. Together they made a fascinating sight.

Their contrasting natures were reflected clearly in their handwriting, and one can see the obvious differences from a graphological point of view. Hers was broad, large, bold and unrestrained, with a generous use of the space of the writing paper. Popper's was meticulously fitted into the space, with small gothic letters evenly leaning to the right.

They were both brilliant performers, but in this area one could also find contrasting speed, fervor, and power. The absolute assurance of Popper's technique and the penetrating beauty of his tone induced in the listener a relaxed joy. His graceful and deft handling of the bow yielded light, fine nuances of elegant nobility.

In any combination of pianist and cellist there is a contrast between the literature with which each is endowed. The massive piano repertoire greatly outweighs the somewhat limited number of solo works for the cello. And the percussive piano is capable of much greater dynamic impact than the lyric cello. Popper's contributions as a composer for his instrument added greatly to his lustre.

The marriage of these two young and handsome artists charmed the public, as do most such marriages between celebrities. It was a dazzling combination, which was eventually to burn itself out.

In November, 1873, one and one-half years after their marriage, Sophie played on a special charity concert, held in the new Opera House. The house was sold out, at two hundred fifty guilders for each box—a very high price. The concert was held as a benefit for a worthy cause under the patronage of the Emperor. A year later, Sophie was awarded the title of "Court Pianist" by Franz Joseph.

As time passed, some of the true affection between them began to be overshadowed by instances of professional jealousy. If we remember that these artists were of the period in which personality, and the adoration of the public, were important ingredients in a career, it is possible to imagine how any small matter could upset the delicate balance between them. They actually began to measure the length and volume of the applause, and rather than feeling pleasure for the other, would be distressed if it were greater than their own!

Liszt, whose admiration towards his pupil was expressed in many ways, at one time gave her a manuscript of his newly composed "Hungarian Rhapsody." In order to keep it a secret from her husband, Sophie practiced and learned it away from home. On a joint recital in

Vienna, she played, as an encore, a brilliant first performance of the new "Rhapsody." The reaction of the audience was naturally overwhelmingly jubilant. In the wings, Popper measured the applause and noted the number of bows, and gradually grew suspicious that his wife had gone beyond the ordinary limits of fair competition by surprising the audience with this spectacular piece.

As he was a satirist and wit of the first class, he thought now of a means to make a strong musical retort. When it came his turn, after his own group of solos, to perform an encore, he announced that he would play an improvisation on the theme of the same new "Rhapsody"—for cello alone. He played his version of the "Rhapsody" in various transformations, with embellishments and figurations, using all the fiery ornamentation, runs and double-stops at his command, and building to a close which brought the house down.

Tension was brewing between them on the way home, and in the apartment an argument exploded. Sophie completely lost her temper, endangering his safety by hurling at him anything she could grab, and screaming reproaches for his daring to challenge the success of "her Rhapsody."

Popper carefully calculated his next move. He needed to stop this uncontrolled outburst of rage without harming her physically. He gently lifted one of the cats, walked to the open window, and released it from the second story onto the sidewalk below! One hopes that this was not during the cat's ninth life! The rather ruthless gesture, striking hard at Sophie's tender feelings for cats, shocked her into quiet, and for a few days there was peace in the house. It did not save the marriage.

In 1876, the marriage was "blessed" by the birth of a daughter, whom they named Celeste. According to the very scarce available information, the professional life of both parents made it necessary to place her in a foster home, in Northern Bohemia, apparently quite soon after she was born. Such an arrangement was not unusual in those days, when a wet-nurse was often needed under certain circumstances.

At that point in their joint careers they were concertizing very actively, mostly together. Sometimes there appear reports of individual performances. Writing in an entry dated December 10, 1876, in her book "Music Study in Germany," the American pianist Alice Fay, gave her reaction to a Menter recital in Berlin:

"Menter played everything by heart. The concert was her own, except a few vocal numbers which were given. At the end, Tausig played a duo with her for two pianos; he was playing the second part. I was charmed with her beauty and with her playing."

The French violinist Emile Sauret toured Spain and Portugal with Popper in 1882. Sauret had been married to Maria Teresa Carreño for a short time.

A serious rift began about the year 1879, at which time Popper placed himself in the hands of the Viennese impressario Ignaz Kugel. He became tremendously busy with his own solo tours which covered the continent from Scandinavia to Italy. At the same time Sophie Menter was also concertizing with momentous success, on the continent, but not in the same places. And in April of the year 1881, she played her London debut; she was to return there many times. George Bernard Shaw, who was not yet a music critic when she first played there, wrote of her in the London Times, in 1888, the following vivid appraisal:

". . . There is an enormous exhilaration and sense of enlarged life and freedom communicated to me by her superlative and victorious power and adroitness. I worship her magnetic muscle; I admire her puissant hands; I expand in the reflection of her magnificent strength, her suppleness, her swiftness, her inexhaustible, indefatigable energy . . ."

In the midst of a very full season for each of them, and one during which Sophie played three times in Moscow alone, they again combined forces for a joint tour, this time to Russia. It was known that they had been separated from each other for many months, and were undoubtedly estranged. When this tour of 1882 was taken, someone made the observation to Hellmesberger that it seemed strange under the circumstances. Hellmesberger explained: "With Popper business comes first, and pleasure afterwards."

It was in the following year—1883—that Menter accepted an offer to join the faculty as professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, from Rubinstein, the director. This new allegiance fixed her in a distant orbit, and was an apparent symptom of a total break between herself and Popper. But it was a very successful achievement on her part. Liszt was glad for her, and wrote her as follows: ". . . When you have signed the Petersburg Conservatory contract let me know. You know, of course, that I very much approve this turn and trend in your brilliant artistic career. It requires no excessive obligations, and will be an advantage to you."

The association with the St. Petersburg Conservatory was to come to an end in 1887. There was a confrontation between Menter and some new regulations which resulted when sweeping changes were adopted at the Conservatory. Rubinstein, as Director, reserved for himself the sole right to make decisions regarding hiring and firing of teachers, and to whose class female students might be assigned, regardless of the wishes of relatives or parents. The faculty was subject to discriplinary action if there was any friction over these regulations. Menter rebelled against the dictatorial nature of these new constraints, and left.

While she was in St. Petersburg—in 1886—the divorce decree was

Eugene d'Albert, to whom Maria Teresa Carreño (a rival of Sophie Menter) was wed for a brief duration and with whom she concertized.

granted between Menter and Popper. Celeste was now ten years old; Popper was given custody of her, but of course his life of constant travel did not make it feasible for him to keep her with him, and she continued under the supervision of her foster-parents.

After the divorce, the antagonism was still very much alive. In his reminiscences concerning Liszt, his pupil, the famous pianist and conductor Arthur Friedheim tells that he asked Sophie Menter the whereabouts of Popper, having heard them previously in concert together. Her reply was emphatic: "He is in Hell! . . . Or, if he is not there yet, they are on the lookout for him. He had his qualities, but he was so jealous that I could not bear him. While I played, he would stand in the wings and count my encores, and if I scored more recalls than he, he would raise the devil!"[3] Three years later, Friedheim had almost the same report from Popper concerning Menter!

The public continued Menter worship throughout the years and after her association at St. Petersburg Conservatory. "The reincarnation of Liszt"—as she was dubbed by one critic—was playing all over Europe.

It is difficult to imagine that Popper and Menter could avoid each other during the concert seasons. But we find no record of any encounter between the two. Menter returned to Munich in 1887, after leaving the Conservatory. She had the castle—previously mentioned—in the Tyrol, and this was her residence until her death at age seventy-two, in 1918.

Menter's chief female rival was Maria Teresa Carreño, six years younger. She had studied sporadically in her very early years with several world-famous virtuosos, including Louis Moreau Gottschalk in New York, and Rubinstein in London. She had been only nine years old when she first appeared out of her native Venezuela and astounded everyone with her phenomenal talent. She had a beautiful mezzo-soprano voice, and at several points in her career, digressed from the piano to fill operatic roles. She became the idol of Europe, reaching the height of her popularity during the last decade of the nineteenth century. As a pianist she was powerful, highly individual, and endowed with extraordinary musicianship. She was a serious competitor to Menter.

Carreño was often married. During one short period she was wed to Eugene d'Albert, and concertized with him. An earlier marriage—also brief—was to Emile Sauret, the French violinist.

Menter had a temperamentally explosive nature. It is hard to guess whether, if fate had willed marriage arrangements between Carreño and Popper, and between Menter and Sauret, they might have been more durable than the actual, reverse, situations.

Sauret's career as an artist had some resemblance to Popper's. As a virtuoso and composer for his instrument he was characterized by charm

Following their tour in 1882, Emile Sauret and David Popper received decorations from the kings of Spain and Portugal for their artistry.

and elegance. He seems to have been of a restless nature, and often changed his positions as professor between the various posts.

Together, Popper and Sauret toured Spain and Portugal in 1882, seven years after the divorce between Carreño and Sauret, and just when Popper was beginning to contemplate divorce from Menter. The two men had much in common, and must have had interesting dialogue concerning marriage to famous pianists and the trials of keeping a harmonious public image while fighting professional and marital battles with the fair sex!

Both Popper and Sauret received decorations from the kings of Spain and of Portugal for their artistry. Possibly each would have been eligible for some further distinction for bravery in the arena of marriage.

[1]At the same time that Popper and Menter played there, some kind of artistic revolt was in process, aimed at Mikuli. In response to his letter of congratulations, Popper's reply, dated April 10, 1872, from Czernowitz, expressed deep appreciation for his thoughtfulness in honoring himself and his fiancee with his letter, and the hope that the split among the Lemberg artists would heal. A few years later the Poppers returned to Lemberg and gave three concerts in a row.

[2]The programs of their joint concerts included, other than their solo numbers, sonatas by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rubinstein, Chopin, Boccherini and Brahms (E minor). For his solo numbers Popper played concertos by Boccherini, Servais and Goltermann, and many of his own compositions. Menter's solos were chosen from Bach and Scarlatti, much of Liszt's virtuoso works, Chopin, Rubinstein, Schumann, and arrangements of Weber and Schubert compositions, by Tausig.

[3]Arthur Friedheim, *Life and Liszt* (New York: Toplinger Publishing Co., 1961) p. 90.

Chapter XI

Grand Tours

Popper enjoyed participating in quartet performances on chamber music programs.

The period of Popper's life between 1879 and 1886 was filled with an immense itinerary of solo concert dates. Only once in those years did he perform jointly with Menter—in 1882.

He criss-crossed the European continent several times, and touched every country. His stamina was enormous, making it possible for him to smoothly combine the often inconvenient railroad travel with all his musical activities.

Frequently, in places where he appeared in recitals or as soloist with orchestra, he would also perform in impromptu chamber music concerts. As this was not the chief pursuit of his travels, only a few examples are given here: In January of 1881 he joined Auer, Halpert and Bachrich for three quartet concerts in Vienna. In March of the same year he played a trio concert in Erard Hall in Paris with pianist Breitner and violinist Haft. He performed a chamber music concert with pianist Neitzel and violinist Grishinal in Moscow in 1883. Popper took part in many more occasions of spontaneous chamber music making "on the road" during these busy years.

By 1880 his published opuses had reached sixty in number, out of which about thirty of the most popular were regularly played by all concert cellists, and often on public demand. Certain pieces, such as "Papil-

lon," "Arlequin," "Elfentanz," "Reigen" and "Gnomentanz," inevitably brought clamor from the audience for repetition.

The violinists Auer, Sauret, Hermann, Kuhn, Neruda, Ferrari, Eissler and Halir, each using his own personal transcription, performed the "Spinningsong," "Elfentanz," "Tarantella" (Op. 33), "Carneval" and "Nocturne." It was no wonder that the public was eager to hear the composer and virtuoso in person when his own concerts were announced.

Usually the critics praised his beautiful and sensuous tone, his flawless technique, and his penetrating musicianship. Hanslick and Shaw had but little esteem for his compositions, but acknowledged him to be one of the greatest masters of his instrument. They did not exert much influence on the fond enthusiasm of either the public, or of Popper's colleagues, for his much-liked pieces.

Below are quoted several examples of the type of critical writing which was the response almost everywhere Popper performed, and which reflected the general public acclaim usually accorded to him. Popper's art received the highest accolades over a period of several decades.

The only exception to his very hearty praise came from Hanslick, the famous Viennese critic. Hanslick was widely read and quoted in the European press, not because he was infallible in his critical judgment, but for his brilliant style and penetrating observations.

In some of his statements it is demonstrated that he was preconditioned to react adversely to the cello as a solo instrument. In his collected writings *From the Concert Hall* he wrote:

"There is certainly no music lover who does not like the cello. Therefore how does it happen that as a concert instrument it so quickly becomes tiresome? Almost every cellist not only wants to display his beautiful cantilena in melodious passages, but also he particularly wants to exhibit his bravura technique, which, because of the nature of the instrument, is limited within a narrow range. In fast tempo unmerciful jumps and slides are heard, and on the lower strings a rough rattle, and a childish lisping violin-like playing in the higher register, where, particularly in the double-stops, it seldom can be played in tune." In a later article he said, "Excessive cello music makes me melancholy and annoyed."

Hanslick's criticism of Popper, of Jan. 29, 1884, when read in juxtaposition with several other European criticisms, reveals an almost grudging admiration for the brilliant performance which everyone else so highly praised, along with a belittling of his compositions. The impression is somewhat confusing.

In 1881, in Berlin, the report in the December 8th issue of *Fremdenblatt* observed:

Karl Halir was among the many violinists who, each using his own personal transcription, performed Popper's "Spinningsong," "Elfentanz," "Tarantella" (Opus 33), "Carneval," and "Nocturne."

"Grützmacher, Cossman and Popper are great names among cellists. All three are technically on the same level. But as far as the total effect of performance is concerned, Popper's playing is the most expressive. It is a happy circumstance that he is also a remarkable composer . . . More beautiful singing cantilenas . . . We have seldom experienced from any other cellists."

In the same year, Popper's restraint and subtle nuances did not quite satisfy the taste for musical excitement for the critic in the *Prager Tagblatt:*

"Popper has a wonderful soulful tone, and his cantilenas are . . . noble and sensitive. But in itself, refinement of performance is not sufficient. The expression of consummate artistry is also demonstrated in high passion, and agitatingly dramatic, as well as lyrical and elegiac, playing. Such expression we miss almost totally in the Popper performance. While his artistic characteristics are very lofty and precious, we do hope that he will soon solve the problem and find a way to achieve that grand, authoritative quality possessed by all true artists."

In a report given in the Madrid newspaper *Esperanze y Sola* in 1882, the innovations Popper displayed in his playing seem to have caused considerable surprise:

"Popper is an original and notable artist who dominates his instrument as few can, and obtains from it extremely sweet sounds that astound the most knowledgeable of the art, not knowing which to admire more—the prodigiousness of the execution, the irreproachable refinement of his intonation even in the most difficult passages, or the originality of the compositions which he executes, and in which are seen united his inspiration and talent.

"As is similar with Rubinstein on the piano, the meticulous could find, at times, unprecedented elements in his technique, but. . .if one considers them as defects, one sees the imprint of genius which imposes itself upon all rules, breaks barriers which for him are useless, and creates beauty, above and beyond all precepts of technique. The 'Elfentanz' and 'Russian Phantasy,' among other works that we could mention, suffice to qualify Popper as a star of the first magnitude in the musical world."

Popper played two concerts in St. Petersburg, on March 17th and 19th, 1883: the *St. Petersburger Herald* gave the following review:

"David Popper has been *persona gratissima* of the Friends of Music of St. Petersburg for many years, and accordingly, the participation of the great violoncello virtuoso is no less popular today than it has been for many years past. He is the most performed composer for this magnificent

instrument, and this last quality has assured him the love and gratitude of cellists for all time.

"Playing his own concerto with extraordinary success on the eighth symphony concert, under the direction of Anton Rubinstein, David Popper added once again to his many triumphs.

"After the unfortunate reception given the various foreign cellists of this season, one must reluctantly ask himself why it is that artists who are considered famous in other countries cannot make any impression here? The answer to the question is found in the circumstance that Petersburg, spoiled by our great Davidoff, can only recognize greatness in a world famous artist such as David Popper. Only he can shake our public apathy toward cello performances, and unleash a veritable storm of applause over the difficult terrain of our concert hall. The very interesting program, which was colorful, but stylishly varied, brought the old, the new, and the very new . . .

"In his performance he showed an ideal virtuosity . . . which uses his technique not to enhance himself, but to serve and ornament his art. This is the reason that Popper stands so high, and why we name him an artist 'by the grace of God.' "

By May, 1883, Popper was playing a series of concerts in Copenhagen, concerning which the correspondent wrote:

"The big event of the concert season is characterized by the two words, 'David Popper'—who came, saw, and conquered. With his genial artist's personality he gave our season a special mark—a type of artistic blessing. His immense success, may I say, actually reached him from every level of the public. The master gave five concerts in our not exactly enthusiastic city—five concerts at double the usual prices were completely sold out! And the great hall of the Casino roared each time with the cheers and ovations of a delighted and frenzied audience. In fact one would find it difficult to imagine the unbelievable admiration which took reign for our David Popper. For weeks on end he was actually the lion of the day. We smoked 'Popper' cigars, and read brochures about Popper which were sold on the streets.

"We have heard that the King and Queen and the Royal Princes and Princesses attended three of this artist's concerts, and that at a concert held at the court, Popper was decorated by the King with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Danneborg.

"The artist encountered the same success in other Danish towns; and now, with all our hearts, all Danish music lovers bid the greatest cellist of our time a happy goodbye!"[1]

Popper returned to Vienna in January, 1884. From his performance at that time, we have the three following criticisms:

"Popper gave a most interesting concert, after an absence of four years. He is unquestionably the most important virtuoso . . . He has not only preserved his beautiful singing tone of former years, but his technique has grown to unbelievable heights. His new concert étude 'Spinningsong' cannot be be played by anybody else at such spped with such perfection and elegance. He is the most prolific composer for his instrument among his contemporaries . . . "[2]

"David Popper gave his farewell matinée. What a superb artist he is!—not only in performing his own excellent compositions but also in interpretation of other works, to which he gives an added luster by his incomparable art. The new Sonata by Grieg can be tolerated only if it is performed by Popper. In virtuosity he is a unique master."[3]

"A happy return!—after four years, of the beloved and always welcome Popper! He played his own violoncello concerto, from which the parting was not difficult—but the virtuoso we had missed . . . He also had produced a very effective bravura piece, which was nobly played and well received.

"As one of the leading masters of his instrument, the admiration of half of Europe has been forced upon him. The appreciation generated by his art-pieces—a certain child-like joy—seems to me the most prevailing reaction. Yet no sentiment or emotion remains with the listener. In his recent concerts, I did not experience any deep musical impression either from his playing, or even less, from his compositions . . .

"An almost jubilantly intense reception was given to his 'Spinning Song,' a startling and dazzling piece of virtuoso playing continually near the bridge, with high harmonic tones, and whining and wailing effects. As he rushed up and down chromatic passages, one could imagine a cat-festival soirée on the roof of a gloomy spinning room. It is impossible that such passages could be played absolutely in tune. There is a constant shift between accurate, and not so accurate, pitch. Possibly there is a joke in this constant alternation between in, and out, of tune sounds, to arouse a mixed sensation in the audience, from laughter to amazement."[4]

The same winter Popper played in Prague. Concerning his concert, we have the following report:

"Popper, the virtuoso, conquered over our lethargic audience, who too often abstain from going to concerts. His concert was sold out. The calm warmth of his singing cantilenas had an uncommonly comforting effect on the audience and, as always, his performance was excellent.

"To describe his stupendous technique one would need to invent a new vocabulary of praise. His swift, rushing passage work, and intricate virtuosity in harmonics are simply astounding!"[5]

By spring his travels took him to successes farther north, one of which evoked the heartiest praise:

"At the eighth Philharmonic concert, the greatest interest of the audience was concentrated on the widely recognized—but till now locally unheard—famous violoncellist David Popper.

"Without any doubt David Popper is the sovereign master of his instrument. . .His performance is a combination of assurance and exuberance, full of vitality, warmth and poetry. . .He is one of the most intelligent and sensitive musicians known.

"No wonder, with these excellent qualifications, that he sparked the enthusiasm of the audience, and that after two movements from his own E minor Concerto, he encored with performances of Schumann's 'Traumerei' and the piquant 'Gavotte' of his own composition."[6]

Popper's fondest memories of his concert tours related to his appearances in Germany and in Russia. He toured Russia nine times, revisiting the great cities repeatedly. I remember a few incidents from these journeys which Popper described to me. He was fond of recalling his personal experiences with Russian colleagues and public.

A day before the concert at which he was to play his *E minor Concerto* with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic under Anton Rubinstein (March 11, 1883) an accident happened to his Amati. Several days were going to be needed to repair the damage. Fortunately, the kind and helpful Davidoff loaned him his own Stradivarius.[7]

Davidoff's stature as a virtuoso was unique in the international world, and supreme in Russia. Therefore the comments which appeared in the press following the concert which Popper played on Davidoff's cello are of particular interest.

It was not unusual that colleagues in trouble were helped by their friends. In 1843 Piatti, traveling homeward to Italy, was compelled to sell his cello as he passed through Pest for lack of funds. In Munich Liszt, who was planning a charity concert for the poor, invited Piatti to join him in the concert. As he did not have an instrument, the prominent cellist and teacher, Joseph Menter, loaned him his cello for the concert. According to Grove's Dictionary, Liszt later gave Piatti an Amati.

Popper frequently received gifts in tribute. One, a very beautiful vase of hammered silver, with floral designs, was presented to him in Tiflis in 1885. It stands about twelve inches high, and an inscription on its base reads: "To Mr. David Popper from his admirers." Naturally, the vase became one of his treasures; most fortunately it was rescued, and is in the possession of a former dear pupil of Popper's.

Popper told me of a gentle knock on the door of the artist's room during the intermission of his concert in Odessa. After his own response of

"Come in!" a well-dressed middle-aged gentleman introduced himself, in German, and asked Popper if he would kindly play for him—right there in private—the "Kol Nidre."

The incident took place during the reign of Alexander III (1881-1894), while anti-semitic activities and persecutions against the Jews were very intense. Popper understood the reasons for the secretive and emotional nature of the request for the performance of the song. He played the prayerful melody as he had heard his father sing it on the Day of Atonement, back in his childhood. When he had finished, the visitor pulled out a thousand ruble note from his pocket-book, and overwhelmed by the music and with gratitude, handed it to Popper with moist-eyed thanks.

In 1891 the editor of the *Pester Lloyd*[8] had asked Popper to put down some of his experiences for the journal. The following excerpts are from Popper's own writing in response to this request:

". . . In Russia concert tours are very strenuous because—as in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Odessa—there is a second concert right after the recital. The public is insatiable, always demanding encores, and when the artist finally indicates that everything has come to an end, and he is exhausted, then there begins a demand for more music. The audience tirelessly remains, and crowds the lobby and staircase leading to the outside. When the weary artist finally makes his appearance, the people—of all sizes, ages, and shapes—enthusiastically demonstrate their love! Not like in other countries—which I don't want to name. There, even before the concert is over, the audience rushes out—like pilgrims to Mecca—to the coat-room to fetch their belongings. It often happened to me in Russia—and to Sarasate, Joachim and others, too—that some robust members of the audience picked one up on their shoulders, paying no attention to one's middle-European ability for equilibrium. They would let me sit there on their shoulders among loud enthusiastic shrieks . . . Well, I personally prefer their rushing to the wardrobe after the concert . . ."

In the same article he told that on his trips from one large Russian city to another, there was often an opportunity to play an additional concert in a town which was not on the main rail line. On such occasions it became necessary to journey in a horse-drawn sleigh. He wrote of a heart-warming incident on the side trip from Riga to Dorpat, when the sleigh was pulled by three horses and driven by an enormous Russian coachman:

". . . On the way we stopped in a small town for rest and warm tea. While we chatted in the inn, a delegation of citizens came, and very politely asked if I would give a little concert for the music lovers of the town. I was glad to comply with their request, and also for the benefit of

a few hours' rest from traveling, which was certainly not unwelcome to me . . . How great was my surprise when, as I stepped on the concert podium the first time, first a few people and then the whole audience rose as one, and in a loud and friendly voice 'Good evening!' reached my ears. When one is far from his home and experiences the gratifying feeling of a spontaneous expression and warmth of this greeting, he feels suddenly at home . . ."

Popper once related to Zsámboki—his pupil, and my colleague—the following story: on one of the Russian tours Popper received an invitation for lunch from a certain prince, whose estate was several miles from St. Petersburg. The prince was an ardent music lover, an amateur cellist, and a collector of rare musical instruments and art treasures. He was eager to show his cellos to Popper. An appointment was made for a later date, because of the tight schedule.

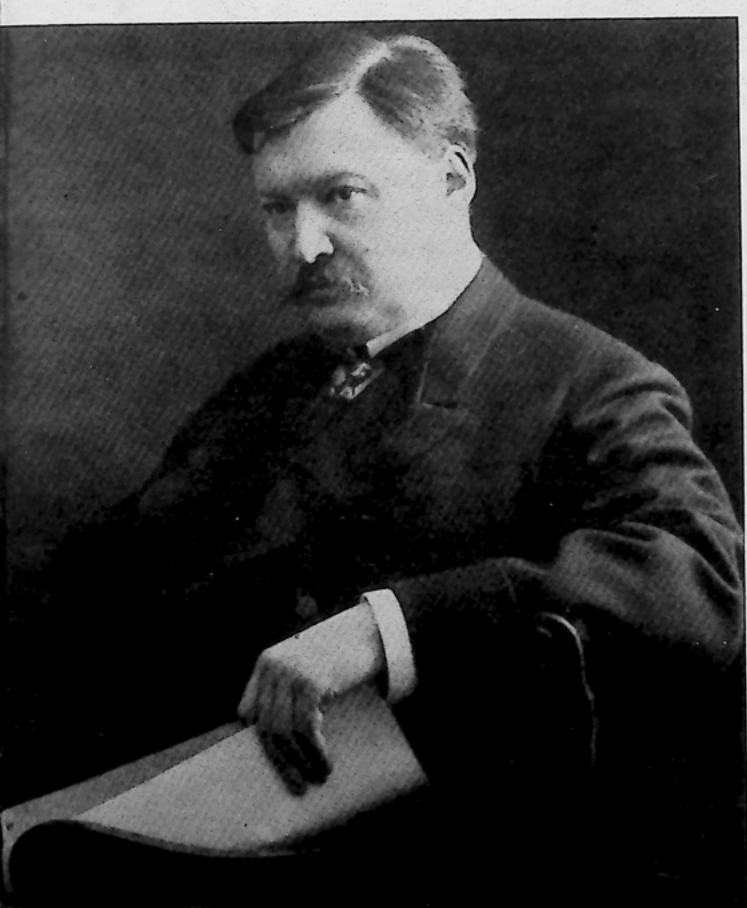
When the day came, an elegant sleigh with three horses was waiting at the hotel entrance. The footman brought a luxurious fur-lined coat, which comfortably fitted over Popper's European overcoat, and tucked his passenger in carefully with large fur robes, to keep his legs warm. The horses gayly flew over the highway toward their destination, to the accompaniment of tinkling bells, and in spite of extreme cold the ride was very pleasant. (He later vividly recalled the ride and the lash of the whip in one of the variations of his "Russian Phantasy").

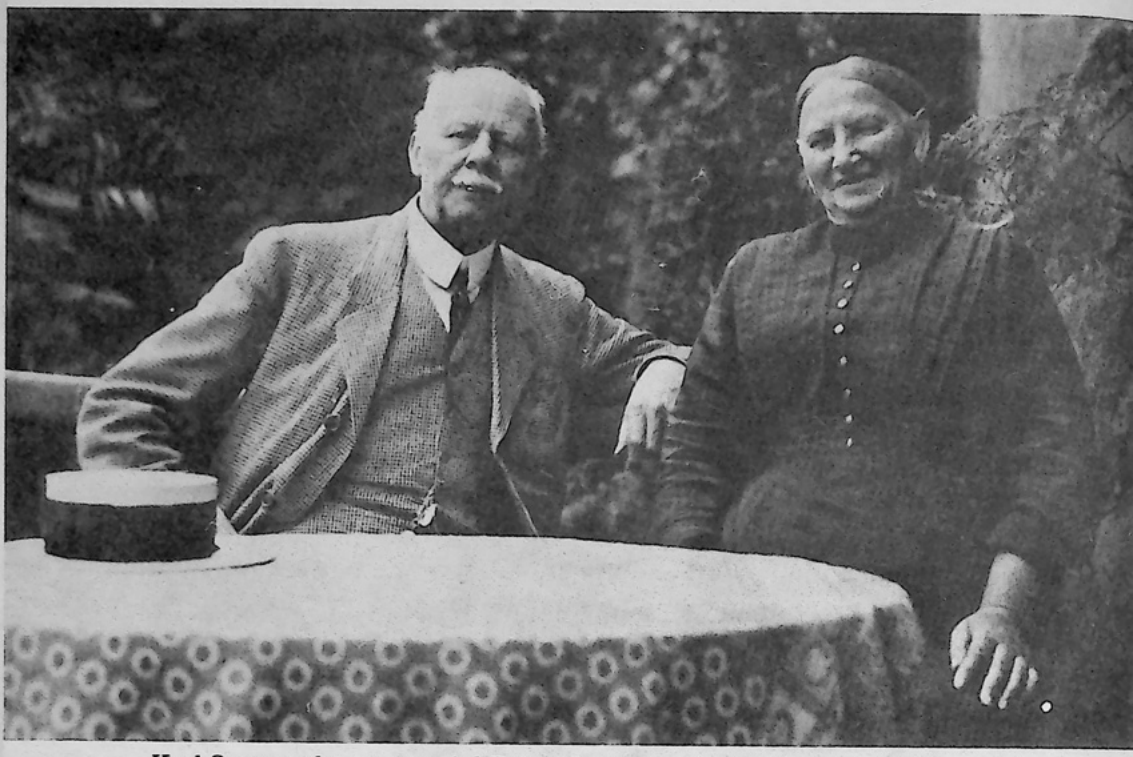
After the pleasant repast, drinks and cigars, the prince led his guest into the music room, where several cellos were kept in a glass cabinet. Displayed there, side by side, were instruments by Amati, Guarnerius, Ruggieri and Stradivarius. As Popper related, they were the most beautiful examples made by the master instrument makers, and all four in perfect condition.

Popper tested each of them, expressed his admiration, and complimented his host for his good judgment in securing these instruments. What Popper did not say was that he resented the fact that these instruments were in the possession of an amateur, rather than of young artists who were unable to purchase such fine instruments.

In parting, the prince asked Popper to sign his guest-book. Just before his farewell handshake and good wishes, the prince asked Popper what he liked best among his treasures, at the same time glancing toward the music room. Never one to miss an opportunity for a jest, Popper said that the fur-lined coat impressed him the most—as he was assisted into it for the return journey. Both the prince and Popper had a good laugh, which was possibly very costly for Popper. He never discovered what was in the prince's mind when he posed the question. Had he intended to present him with a cello?

Above: Karl Stasny, the pianist in whose company (along with violinist Sauret) Popper first toured in Spain and Portugal, 1882. Below: Alexander Glazunov arranged the piano parts of Spanish Dances *(Opus 54) and* Serenade Orientale *(Opus 18) for orchestra, especially for Popper's friend Alexander Wierzbilowicz, cellist.*





Karl Stasny, who accompanied Popper in 1882, and Mrs. Stasny in 1914.

The next day, a messenger arrived at Popper's door, carrying a large package from the prince. When he opened the puzzling bundle he found a beautiful fur-lined coat with a large collar of red fox fur. It was quite new, but otherwise identical to the one Popper had jokingly admired. In later years I often saw Popper wearing this coat. Among the photos which he gave me I have a picture of him in it, and I know that it gave him warm comfort against the freezing days of winter.

Popper first toured in Spain and Portugal in 1882, in the company of the pianist Stasny and the violinist Sauret. In his reminiscences Popper recalls that he visited Spain repeatedly for seven years.

Impressions from these trips were preserved in some of his best and most inspired works, a group of five pieces published as *Spanish Dances* (Op. 54). Each of these pieces he dedicated to a friend. The "Serenade"—number two of this group— he dedicated: "To my dear friend Alexander Wierzbilowicz, solo cellist, Royal Opera, St. Petersburg." In the Leningrad Bibliothek de Saltzkov-Schedrin there is an autographed copy, on which in less formal words Popper wrote: "To my dear good friend Alexander with heartfelt remembrance from his devoted friend, D. Popper, St. Petersburg, Jan. 6, 1883." The piano parts of this

piece and also of "Serenade Orientale" (Op. 18) were arranged for orchestra by Alexander Glazunov, especially for Wierzbilowicz.

In his article in the *Pester Lloyd* Popper related that, following their first concert in Madrid, on Nov. 5, 1882, where the King and Queen had been in attendance, they were invited to play at the royal palace at eleven-thirty the following night.[10]

Two hundred guests were already assembled when Popper and his colleagues arrived at the great hall, at ten forty-five. They were received by the young King Alfonso XII and his Queen Maria Christina (an Austrian Archduchess from Vienna) and were introduced by the German Ambassador to the Court of Spain, Count Solms, whom Popper had known for many years as a great lover of the arts. The Queen was eager to hear about her beloved Vienna from an Austrian.

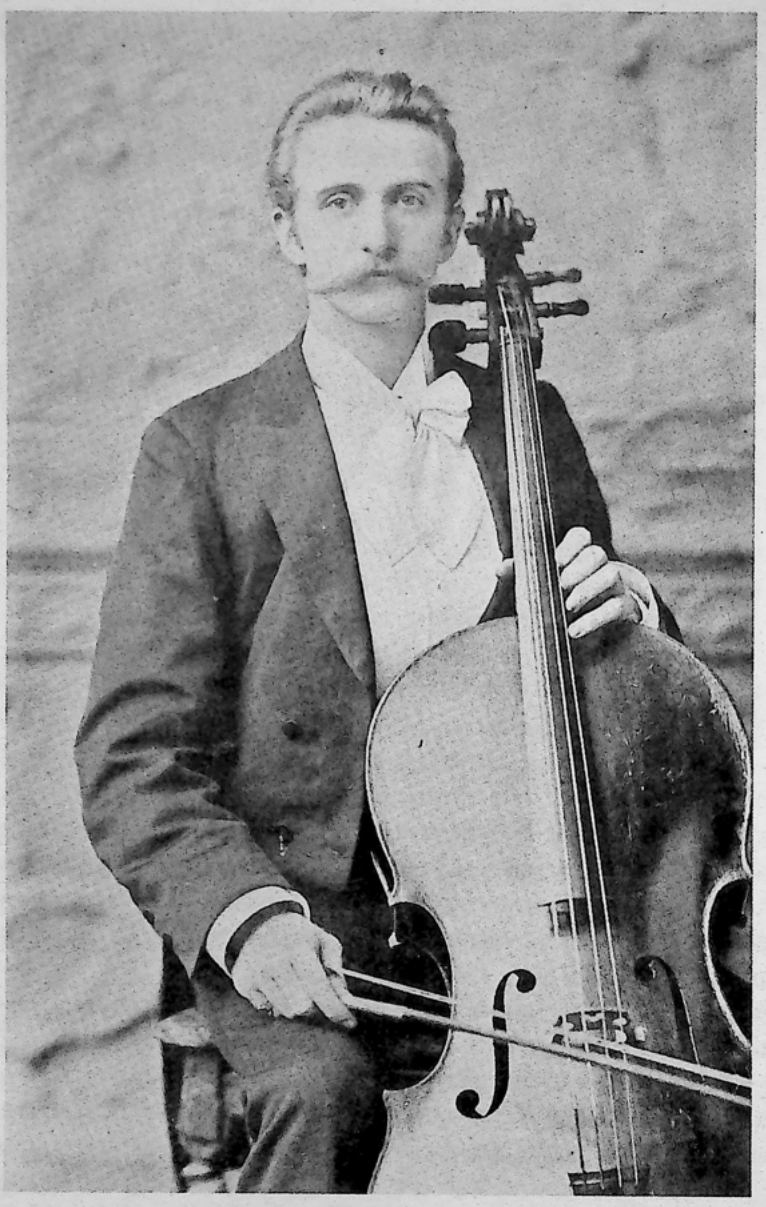
". . . As I took a low bow before the Queen, I stepped back a little, when I heard someone saying in a firm voice, 'Pardon me, Herr Popper—that was my foot!' Realizing that I had stepped on the King's foot, I apologized for my unintentional wrong step. The King was kind; he not only expressed his understanding in words, but he also granted me the Cross of Carlos III, and gave me, as a special gift, a box of selected finest Havana cigars made 'for the private stock of His Majesty'."

The years up to 1886 were filled with frequent performances of the *E minor Concerto* and the *Im Walde* Suite in orchestra concerts in Paris, Leipzig, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Basel, Vienna, and many other cities.

In the year 1881 it had been announced in the papers that Popper would make an American tour, but soon after, readers were told that the tour was cancelled. As touring in America had proved to be more profitable than in any other country in the world, for other artists, this caused quite a surprise.

We discovered the reason why Popper, the thrifty and practical man, would have given up such an offer in a dedication written much later—dated 1895—on the back of a photo. It was written to his sister Jetti, who lived in New York, and starts, "With loving greetings to her family and all the children . . .," closing with the following message: ". . . In my old days (he was fifty-two) I hope to conquer my fear of seasickness, and, with God's help, will come to see you." His anxiety about seasickness must have developed from his several experiences of crossing the English channel. The turbulent channel waters often give very rough riding to voyagers to England.

Incidentally, William Popper, his younger brother, toured America, and performed with the New York Symphony Society under Leopold Damrosch in February, 1878. William Popper was a member of the Vienna Court Opera for twenty-five years, retiring in 1905.[11]



Anton Hegner, Danish cellist and composer (1861-1915) received plaudits from the "Christiania Press" for his performance at the Musik Verein in Copenhagen: "Since David Popper was here, twelve years ago no finer playing has ever been heard."

Even if David Popper's fear of seasickness could have been conquered, his many concert engagements in Europe scarcely allowed him time for an Atlantic crossing. In those days it took close to two weeks to make the sea voyage to America.

He may have had hopes to eventually slacken his pace and try to go to America, but new developments in his life were to give him new activities and allegiances, and put limits on his time for concert tours.

[1]*NZfM* (Leipzig), May, 1883.

[2]*Morning Post* (Vienna), January 22, 1884.

[3]*Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (Vienna), January 29, 1884.

[4]Eduard Hanslick, *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), January 29, 1884.

[5]*Prager Tagblatt (Prague), 1884.*

[6]*Signale* (Hamburg), March 3, 1884.

[7]This he had himself received as a gift from his pupil, the amateur cellist Count Mathieu Jurgewitch Wielhorsky.

[8]A German language newspaper in Budapest.

[9]In addition to his devotion to his fine cello, Wierzbilowicz also gave much attention to his vodka. As a precaution, he transported his instrument on a sleigh, which he pulled to and from his engagements at the Opera and at concerts. He was a pupil of Davidoff.

[10]The other artists were: Sauret and Stasny.

[11]William Popper had several salon pieces to his credit, which were published during the late eighties by D. Rahter—among them: "Romance," "Elegie," "Mazurka," "Impromptu" and "Am See." He was a pupil at the Prague Conservatory, under George Goltermann and later Moritz Wagner.

Chapter XII

Budapest

Photograph of the old Hungarian Royal Academy of Music in which an apartment was reserved for Liszt.

As the "marriage concertant" disintegrated, and the two artists were setting themselves on individual courses, there arrived an era of complete change for Popper.

In March of 1886 the musical journals announced that, beginning in September, Popper would teach cello at the Royal Hungarian Academy of Music in Budapest. This would mean for him a new permanent residence, and instead of constant travel, only occasional tours.

To make the change more complete the long years of stress between Popper and Menter had finally ended in the granting of a divorce decree. In the summer of 1886 Popper married a young lady from Prague, and embarked on a fresh career as teacher, in a new setting, with his new bride. That neither of them spoke Hungarian at the time seemed only a minor hazard, though she did study and learn it in later years.

The Academy of Music had been born rather late in the century, in comparison to the conservatories of Prague, Leipzig, Paris and Vienna. The role of Budapest had been the troubled one of a struggling provincial capital trying to gain status and recognition as a Hungarian world capital with its own cultural identity. After the political agreements which had created dual monarchy of Austria—Hungary, a yeast of genuine Hungarian nationalism was set to rise. Unfortunately, the results were

both positive and negative. Germanic elements in the cultural establishment were practically ostracized by some of its leaders. A group of enthusiasts, at their head the far-sighted Minister of Culture, August Trefort, instigated a plan to organize a major conservatory, under Royal patronage. They appealed to Liszt to sponsor the school, and to be its president.

Even though Liszt had left his native Hungary at the age of ten, his interest in Hungarian affairs was very alive, and he had intense concern for his country's welfare. It was for this very reason that he was at first reluctant to join the project, feeling it was inadequately financed, and would be severely limited from the beginning if no teachers of international stature, of foreign origin, were selected to set the program into momentum. There was some resistance to such an idea, the idealists wanting to produce a purely Hungarian product from the very start.

There were already two music schools in Pest—the National Conservatory, and the Hungarian Theatre School. But many young Hungarian talents were attracted across the border to the Vienna Conservatory, or the prestigious music centers and great conservatories in Paris, Leipzig, Prague, or St. Petersburg. When they entered professional life, they were no longer "Hungarian" artists! It was Liszt's idea that the desired standards of excellence would only be attained by importing teachers who could train the native artists to an outstanding level of performance and musicianship, and he felt that such results would be the only justification for a new Royal Hungarian Academy. He did not seem eager to lend his name to a doubtful venture, but was very interested and wished to be of help if the plan could be realistic. In his published letters there are several which refer directly to the organization of the Academy.

In 1874, still opposed to the idea because of the country's meager financial state, and in doubt that it would be successful, he wrote to Ödön Mihalovich, a Hungarian composer then in the forefront of the plan:

". . . I resume our conversation . . . on the long gestation—omen of abortion—of the Hungarian Academy of Music.

"I trust that my very dear and honored friends will be convinced of my perfect disinterestedness in the question; the idea of an Academy is in no way mine; if I become a sponsor to it, it will be in self-defense and without any connivance at paternity whatever; I even refuse to help in the procreation of the (infant); and, far from making myself, before my time, in any way its champion or propagandist, I hesitate over the difficulties which are opposed to its birth . . . the difficulties have increased rather than diminished during these last three years . . . The financial situation of the country appears to be such that one must scruple to burden the budget with expenditure beyond urgent needs . . . It would

Photograph of the new Hungarian Royal Academy of Music in Budapest.

be a poor luxury to add a third music school to the two schools already existing (meagerly) at Pest. If one cannot emulate with honor the similar establishments of Vienna, Leipzig, etc . . . what is the good of troubling any further about it? Now, to give a vigorous impulse to Art among us, we must first unite and fuse into one spirit a set of professors of well-known capabilities—a very arduous and ungrateful task, the accomplishment of which demands much intelligence, and a sufficient amount of cleverness and of money . . ."

In the same year Liszt wrote to Count Albert Apponyi, member of the Hungarian Parliament, hoping that the plan would succeed if the opposition could be overcome:

"The Government is much interested in this affair; the Sovereign's decision has been obtained; I know not what official publication followed. You yourself, dear Count, have brilliantly persuaded the Chamber of Deputies that the said Academy would be of use in raising Art in Hungary; my necessary humble reserve has been taken by the public as consent. Is it possible now to take no account of such precedents and to draw back when it is a question of advancing? I do not think so, and I am quite of your opinion, as wise as it is opportune.

"In spite of the difficulties of a position embroiled with diverse worries, and in spite of the scantiness of the financial means, we ought to stick to our affirmative position and not in the least to give way . . ."

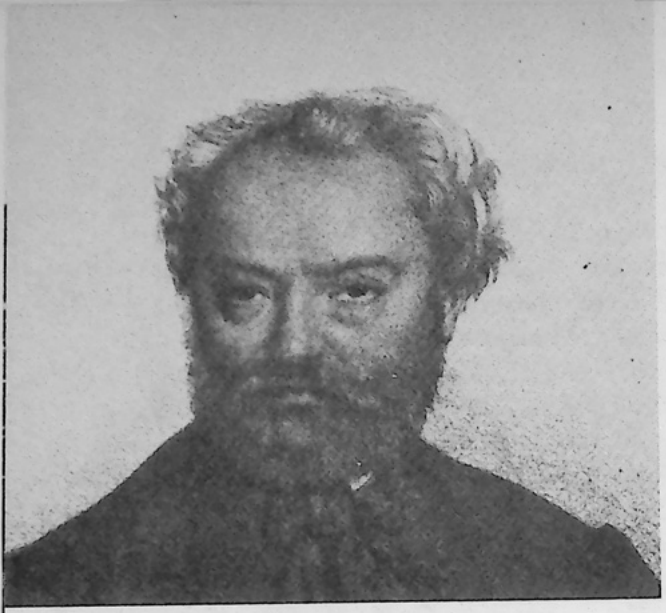
He mentions that his personal remuneration need only be "quiet time to work" in his "own room."

The new school finally opened, in 1875. Liszt was named as President, and the instruction offered consisted of classes in composition, harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, music history, church music, music aesthetics, and the characteristics of Hungarian music. Instrumental instruction was for the piano only—but that was of very high calibre: Franz Erkel—also appointed as Director—was professor of piano, and for three months during the year Liszt would be in residence teaching virtuosos and teachers. Liszt had invited Bülow to teach piano and composition, and Franz Xavier Witt for music theory and composition, but neither was able to accept. Volkmann, who had long been a resident of Budapest, was appointed as professor of composition. The Academy opened with an enrollment of thirty-eight students. Liszt wrote his brother Eduard that he would be in Budapest in November to shape the organization of the school according to the "somewhat difficult local circumstances." There was to be no string department until many years later.

This first building of the Academy was located in an undistinguished area called Fish Place Number Four. Evidently there had been a fish market on the site in ancient times. In the school an apartment was reserved for Liszt. It was a far cry from the palaces in which he was accustomed to be lodged: in Tivoli near Rome at the Villa D'Este and in Weimar at the Altenburg palace, the latter belonging to his good friend the Princess Wittgenstein, and the former to her daughter. At the entrance to his apartment was a tablet inscribed in Hungarian and in German saying "Franz Liszt will see visitors on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, between three and four in the afternoon." In addition to this hearty hospitality, all the lessons he gave were free of charge.

In 1879 a second home for the Academy was acquired—a transformed apartment house on a major boulevard—Sugár út (Ray Ave.). In the dignified four-storied building were a large concert hall on the ground floor classrooms, and on the second floor a spacious apartment with balcony, for Liszt. The number of students had increased rapidly in the first four years.

The cities of Pest, on the east, and of Buda, on the west, facing each other across the Danube, were first united by the building of a bridge between 1839 and 1849, and in 1872 were combined into a much larger civic unit, now called Budapest.[1] The economic and cultural drive added importance to the Academy, and within a few years the increase in student applications indicated the school should expand to include a string department.



Franz Erkel, Hungarian composer and pianist, was Director of the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest during the Hubay-Popper era.

From the very beginning, the pressures continued, to rid the musical establishments of "foreign"—chiefly Germanic—elements. There were complaints when Hans Koessler was imported from the Dresden Conservatory, where he was on the faculty, to teach organ and choral singing, in 1882. But when Volkmann died, in 1883, and Koessler took charge of his class in composition, a real attack on the German influence began in full intensity. Everyone knew that for Koessler, music meant German music, with a special devotion to Brahms. But time was to prove that his German discipline was sufficiently broadminded to protect his pupils from inhibition, and to allow highly individual, and distinctly Hungarian, talents to flower. Bartók, Dohnányi, Kodály, Siklós, Weiner, Reiner and others expressed their indebtedness to him as their teacher. When Koessler retired in 1908, Kodály, Siklós, and Weiner took over the composition, theory, and other class activities he had taught.

But in 1878 there began to be applications for the study of string instruments. It became increasingly urgent to fill this need, and was decided to open a string department in the autumn of 1886.

Liszt wanted to find a distinguished Hungarian violinist to be at the head of the new department. The famous Hungarian painter, Mihály Munkácsy had settled in Paris in 1872. Liszt recalled that when visiting him there, at his palace on Rue Vinier 67, in 1878, he had played sonatas with a young Hungarian violinist, Jenö Hubay, who was at that time in Paris for performances with the Pasdeloup concerts. This was a truly Hungarian talent, having begun his studies with his father Karl Hubay (Huber), a professor at the National Conservatory in Pest and having been sustained by a stipend from the Hungarian government during five years of study at the Berlin Conservatory, under Joachim. In 1882 he had

Jenö Hubay spoke of Popper as "an ideal chamber musician."

become the successor of Wieniawski as first professor at the Brussels Conservatory. He was a close friend of Vieuxtemps, and had established an enviable international reputation. When the Hungarian Minister of Culture extended the invitation from Liszt to organize the string department at the Academy, he decided to give up his position at the Brussels Conservatory because, as he said, "I felt that I should serve the country of my birth." He served it for fifty years.

He realized that in order to have a strong string department, and to be able to organize chamber muic, he must select a cellist of superior attainments, and highly respected in the musical scene, with whom he could carry out his plans. David Popper's name was internationally known: he was a most popular cello virtuoso, and even in lands where he had never been heard in person, his compositions for the cello carried his musical renown. Popper would be a great attraction as a faculty member! In the matter of chamber music playing, he was also an expert, having long been a member of the famous Hellmesberger Quartet in Vienna. Hubay made it a condition of his acceptance that Popper be invited to be on the faculty also.

The timing was favorable. The years of almost constant travel, which had begun in 1872, were beginning to leave some strain. Actually, he had been on the road since he was twenty-one, and he was now forty-three. He had been decorated by seven royal courts in Europe, and his compositions were played everywhere the cello was played. The divorce from Menter, and the new marriage, provided a point of departure which made a complete change of location and of artistic pursuits welcome and natural. In May of 1886 Popper accepted an invitation from Liszt, and agreed to join the faculty, and the new string department with Hubay and Popper was announced in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik.*

Popper was quite ready to give up living out of suit-cases, and residence in a series of hotel-rooms, and the constant long slow trek from place to place by railroad. Though railroad travel had improved very much at the mid-century, it was still very slow (In his *Letters* Liszt wrote that it took eleven hours to travel from Pragerhof to Budapest).

The Hungarian pianist Stephen Thomán, one of the last of the Liszt pupils, was interviewed by the newspaper *Ujság,* Jan. 1, 1927, in connection with his own fortieth anniversary. Thomán described a night journey by train, with Liszt, in 1885. The compartments were naturally dark, with only a tiny kerosene glimmer from the ceiling. Liszt could not sleep well on the train, and drew forth a small candle lantern he had brought, and asked Thomán to read to him by its glow, which he did, the whole night through—"The War Report" by the correspondent Stettenheim, concerning the Russian-Turkish War.

Castle Hill in Budapest floodlit on a summer night. In 1886 Popper accepted an invitation from Liszt and agreed to join the faculty of the Royal Music Academy in Budapest.

In spite of the inconveniences of travel, and all the other stresses of concertizing, Popper was able to relate, in his "Reminiscences," released in 1890:

"A pretty even temperament, not easily disturbed, was the best gift that nature bestowed upon me. This allowed me not only to splendidly endure, but to develop a great inclination for the vast travel circuits in my younger years, which became, in fact, practically indispensable."

Of course the heartwarming experiences of success added much to the glamour of circulating so freely, and the memories of all this activity were rich and rewarding.

A close friend of David Popper's youngest sister Frederika (who became Mrs. Brandeis) was a good friend of Mrs. Karoline Löbl, in Prague. Mrs. Löbl's daughter Olga and the famous artist were brought together, either by design or by chance, when it became certain that Popper's turbulent marriage was at an end, and it was dissolved. Olga was an attractive and intelligent young lady, and had been brought up in a cultured home atmosphere. Though not a professional, she was a music lover; and she was kindly and understanding.

Olga's father was Ephraim Löbl, a prosperous businessman, and founder of a silk firm which was located in the center of the city of Prague. She had three sisters—Emilie, Malvine and Helen—and one brother, Max—who emigrated to New York before the turn of the century. Frederika's husband, Enoch Brandeis, was a bookkeeper at the Löbl establishment. In 1900, when Mr. Löbl died, the business management was continued under Emilie's husband, Richard Lenhart.

It is interesting that she undertook to learn Hungarian, which served to endear her to many in her new environment. When they married, early in the spring of 1886, she was twenty, and Popper was forty-three.

This gap in their years precluded any realistic idea that the bride could assume the rearing and guidance of Celeste, now half her age. The daughter of Sophie and Popper remained in the home of her foster-parents, but Olga's mother supervised her welfare, and in summers she joined her father and step-mother for holidays. Mrs. Löbl eventually helped arrange her marriage.

Popper's new marriage and fresh musical alliances opened vistas on an entirely different life. Now a home was selected—on Sugar Út (Ray Ave.), only four short blocks away from the Academy, a convenient six-room ground floor apartment. The building was one of four harmoniously styled apartment houses around a circular plaza at a boulevard intersection. The avenue was becoming more and more attractive, with elegant coffee houses, fine apartments, and other impressive buildings. It would not be many more years until the Opera House would be erected

Olga Löbl (1886), David Popper's second wife. When they married, early in the spring of 1886, she was twenty and Popper was forty-three.

on its route, and on the huge plaza at the end of the avenue, two museums would face each other—the year 1896 was the celebration of Hungary's thousandth anniversary. In that year the new parliament building was constructed on the Danube, and the first subway in Europe was built under Sugár Út—thus preserving the beauty of the handsome thoroughfare. The paving was of wooden blocks, to muffle the sounds of the horse-traffic. Flowering trees bordered the walks, and the heavily scented blossoms could be enjoyed in the view from Popper's apartment window.

When the former foreign minister Count Gyula Andrássy died, in 1890, the avenue was renamed Andrássy, in his honor; as time has passed, and politics dictated, it has been Stalin Avenue, and has since changed to People's Republic Avenue. Here was Popper's home for the remaining twenty-seven years of his life.

The school year was to begin in September. But alas, a great shock rocked the world of music, and left Popper personally bereaved. Liszt died unexpectedly on July 31st, one month before the opening of the fall semester.

The sudden loss of a great friend deeply affected Popper, and clouded his happiness in his new marriage. The country went into mourning for Liszt: there was talk of bringing his remains to Budapest for burial. But Liszt had told friends that he did not look with favor on the moving of the dead from one grave to another, as had been the case with Beethoven and Schubert, and the plan was abandoned. Liszt died and was buried in Bayreuth.

When the school opened Hubay and Popper laid their plans and organized their classes. A political and cultural periodical welcomed Popper in a front-page article, dominated by his picture:

"The opening of the school year of the Royal Academy of Music has been enriched by two outstanding artists. As we reported a few weeks ago, we have been so fortunate as to acquire the services of Hubay; now, with the successful negotiations with Popper, these two prominent artists tremendously elevate the niveau (level) of our Institution to one which is comparable to other European Music Institutions."

In great detail they related Popper's biography and his reputation as an artist, and as a composer who had "opened new perspectives of technical possibilities of the violoncello."[2] With this warm welcoming article the new Hubay-Popper era became a turning point in the history of the Royal Academy of Music.

Following soon after, an announcement of his new post as professor was combined with a colorful tribute, in a Viennese publication, *Musikinstrumenten-Zeitung:*

Composer Stephen Heller was one of the many Hungarian talents of Popper's day who had gone abroad to study and had been assimilated into the German-Austrian musical life and culture, eventually losing much of their Hungarian identity.

"Personality is the magic which has lifted David Popper, as virtuoso and composer, above all of his colleagues. When we see and hear him perform his compositions, our soul is harmoniously filled with charm and joy. Whenever the name David Popper is mentioned, from deep in our memories (we recall) his nobly featured head leaning over his instrument, the controlled elegance of his bow-arm, the clear sweet tone welling from his cello, and the graceful, harmonious winding melodies, blending with the colorful fireworks of virtuosity. Full credit is due to Popper that the cello is a virtuoso instrument today and will remain so in the future. He expanded the former limits of technical possibilities and enriched the cello literature with interesting effective compositions, which, almost without exception, are used in the repertoire of cellists all over the world . . . David Popper is not only the first cello virtuoso of our time, but will be the most important of all time . . . To have achieved the highest pinnacle of the precarious limits of Art is sufficient glory. Now after often repeated triumphant tours in all of Europe have left him weary, or even blasé, a new field of activity has opened up for David Popper as Professor of the Royal Academy of Music (in Budapest) where he functions with the same zeal, ability, and success as he did as composer and unparalleled artist. His fame flows from distant lands to Budapest, and students are attracted there to seek inspiration and stimulation from their teacher, to take back to their own countries. He will teach them all they can learn in Art; but alas, it will not be possible for him to produce a second David!"

Hungary, and of course Budapest, had been familiar to Popper ever since the Ullmann tour in 1867, and also from playing there with the Hellmesberger Quartet. In 1877 he and Sophie had played in many locations in Hungary, enroute to Warsaw and St. Petersburg; in a letter to his publisher, Bartholf Senff, written from Budapest on April 1, he was enthusiastic.

". . . The Hungarian journey has indeed exceeded all our expectations! There is a devilish lot of music in those Magyars. Everything resounds, sings, and rings music in this land. Particularly the instrumental sounds brought me great joy . . ."

Of course throughout his career Popper had been aware of the many outstanding Hungarian talents who had gone abroad to study, and had been absorbed and assimilated into the German-Austrian musical life and culture, eventually losing much of their Hungarian identity. The list would be very long: a few of them were the composers Stephen Heller, and Karl Goldmark (of the Opera *Queen of Sheba*), violinists Joseph Joachim, Miska Hauser, Edward Reményi, Leopold Auer, Hans Richter

Eduard Remenyi, an Hungarian violinist of Popper's day who had been absorbed into the German-Austrian musical life and culture.

the famous Wagnerian conductor, and Arthur Nikisch, and the cellist Lajos Hegyesi, the pianist Rafael Joseffy and the great Liszt himself.

But Franz Erkel the Director of the Academy, was an important native Hungarian composer and pianist, who had been locally trained by his father, and had become one of the leaders in Hungarian music. He had created the National Opera, composed very popular operas, all of them Hungarian historical subjects, and instigated the beginning of the Philharmonic concerts.

The formerly mentioned Hungarian pianist, Stephen Thomán, had studied with Erkel before his studies with Liszt. He became a member of the piano faculty in the Academy in 1888, and continued with rather a dynasty of great Hungarian musicians, including among his countless pupils Bartók, Dohnányi, and Fritz Reiner.

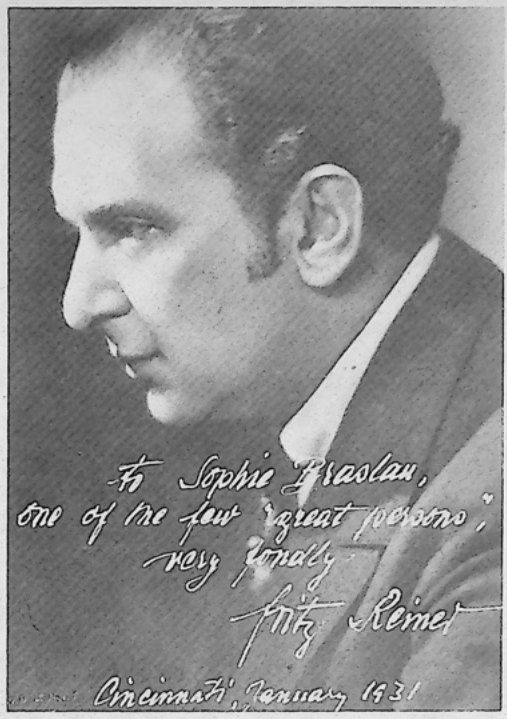
At the opening of the school, Hubay took charge of the violin department, and Popper held classes in cello and chamber music. At first the enrollment was slow, and according to Kodály, the two teachers had ample time to play billiards during school hours, in the coffee house across the street from the Academy.

This period was the beginning of Popper's active interest in teaching. There had been sporadic occasions between his seasons as an orchestra player, and as a touring virtuoso during which he had given a few lessons. But from this point on, he began to dwell on the importance of passing on his technical and musical skills to the students. He had always been too busy for this endeavor. In between tours, and even on train trips for concert dates, he had kept himself busy composing. More than that of Hubay, his reputation was based on his concert career and on the great popularity of his compositions for the cello.

Hubay and Popper had some differences in temperament and in background as related to teaching. Although Hubay had toured Europe with great success, teaching remained a major preoccupation for him, and composition of works for the violin, often flavored with Hungarian Gypsy elements, and the writing of several operas, absorbed much of the balance of his energy and interest. He had arrived at the Academy an already established teacher. And unlike Volkmann, Koessler, and Popper, who never learned the Hungarian language, he could relax and teach in his native tongue.

Because of language there was a constant murmur of disapproval, which surfaced now and then. But actually, most of the applicants at the Academy were comfortably bi-lingual, and spoke German out of courtesy to the teacher, so there was small incentive to learn Hungarian, and little chance to practice it. At least, this was Popper's attitude.

But even as late as 1902, the anti-foreign voices in the press kept up



Above: Fritz Reiner studied under the Hungarian pianist Stephen Thomán at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. Below: Bela Bartók, a product of the Stephen Thomán dynasty of great Hungarian musicians.

Bram Eldering was one of several foreign musicians who joined with Hubay, the sole Hungarian violinist, to fulfill the standards established by Liszt in 1874 and win the approval of local music lovers.

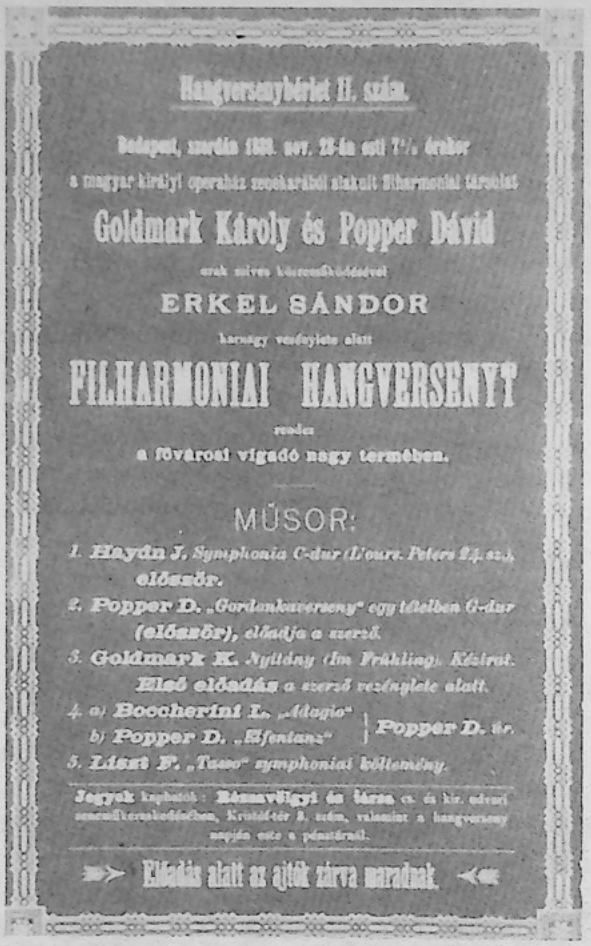
their litany. One journalist, Aurél Kern, questioned if there were any Hungarian cellists on the scene at all, and suggested that the Academy might as well be closed. This spiteful comment was a direct insult to the cellist Jenö Kerpely, who had achieved fame as a member of the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet, an offense against Popper, who was Kerpely's teacher, and against Bartók because the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet had been the first group who had enough courage to play Bartók's first quartet in public. Bartók related the journalist's comment in a letter to his mother.

Popper's cello class seldom exceeded seven or eight students at a time. These met twice a week, for three hour sessions. Another three hour class was held once a week, in chamber music, and was attended by advanced students. These comprised his total work obligation to the Academy, for which he received compensation of several hundred forint a month (which by the turn of the century had gradually increased to about six hundred forint). He also gave some private lessons, at quite a high fee, equivalent to that received by all well-known virtuosos throughout Europe (about ten forint). As Liszt had predicted, the "foreign" professor with his great international reputation attracted students far and wide, and the enrollment steadily increased. In 1899, in an interview with the French journalist Saint-Priest, Popper stated that he could not comply with requests to accept any more pupils, because there were too many applicants.

At the beginning of the season, Popper and Hubay organized the string quartet which bore their names—and was sometimes known as the "Budapest" Quartet when playing in foreign lands. For the second violin chair Hubay chose Victor Herzfeld, a competent Viennese violinist and composer, who in 1884 had been awarded the Beethoven prize, enlisting him to also teach theory and chamber music at the Academy. To play viola Hubay brought with him his pupil from Brussels Bram Eldering, a twenty-two year old Hollander. Eldering left the quartet before very long, to seek broader musical activities: he became concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic, moved to Meiningen, then in 1899 to Köln as concertmaster and as teacher at the Conservatory. His end was tragic. He was killed during an air raid in 1943, in Köln. When he left Budapest his place in the quartet was taken by a Hungarian, Gustáv Szerémy, who was solo violist in the Opera Orchestra.

Popper's participation had been an ideal choice by Hubay. In addition to his great experience in the Hellmesberger Quartet, Popper's refined and noble style closely blended with Hubay's elegant playing in the Vieuxtemps tradition.

The first concert was presented on November 10, 1886, after only



Hangversenyhirlet II. szám.

Budapest, március 1888. évi 23-án esti 7½ órakor

a magyar királyi operaház zenekarából alakult Filharmoniai társulat

Goldmark Károly és Popper Dávid

urak szíves közreműködésével

ERKEL SÁNDOR

karnagy vezetése alatt

FILHARMONIAI HANGVERSENYT

rendez

a fővárosi vigadó nagy termében.

MŰSOR:

1. Haydn J. Symphonia C-dur (D'ours. Peters 2.). ez.) először.
2. Popper D. „Gordonkaverseny" egy tételben G-dur (először), előadja a szerző.
3. Goldmark K. Nyitány (Im Frühling). Kézirat. Első előadás a szerző vezénylete alatt.
4. a) Boccherini L. „Adagio" b) Popper D. „Elfentanz" — Popper D. úr.
5. Liszt F. „Tasso" symphoniai költemény.

Jegyek kaphatók: Rózsavölgyi és társa cs. és kir. udvari zeneműkereskedésében, Kristóf-tér 3. szám, valamint a hangverseny napján este a pénztárnál.

Előadás alatt az ajtók zárva maradnak.

Program of the Budapest Philharmonic with Goldmark and Popper, 1888.

three weeks of preparation, in the concert hall of the Royal Hotel. This first program was indicative of the general tendency of the organization through the years—in which classical literature would be kept in the foreground, other instrumental combinations appear on the programs, and the "moderns" receive a moderate share of allegiance. On this program were the *D Major Quartet* by Mozart, the *E flat Major Quartet* (Op. 127), by Beethoven, and the *B Major Trio* by Rubinstein. The piano part was to have been played by Miss Barette Stepanoff, but as she became suddenly ill, her teacher, Leschetizky from Vienna, took her place.

The criticism of this initial concert was admittedly cautious, but it predicted that "in a short time" the organization would be as famous as the other well-known European quartets.

Brahms had been a frequent visitor to Hungary; after the Hubay-Popper chamber group was formed, he appeared on their concerts as

composer and pianist often. It is to their credit that the group introduced many of Brahms' chamber music works, at a time when he was among the modern composers whose music was difficult to perform and to understand, even though his genius was already recognized. Within the last ten years his four great symphonies had emerged, to great critical acclaim—but they held a puzzled fascination for the public. The *Fourth Symphony* had its premiere in Meiningen in 1885 in the fall, and in January of 1886 was performed with the Philharmonic, under Hans Richter.

During the summer of that year Brahms had been in Thun, Switzerland. On December 20th, soon after the Hubay-Popper organization was formed, a trio concert took place. The program consisted of three works by Brahms, which he had composed while in Switzerland. They were all in manuscript: *Trio in C minor* (Op. 101), *Violin Sonata in A Major* (Op. 100), and *Cello Sonata in F Major* (Op. 99). Kalbeck, Brahms' biographer, lists these all as world premieres, but there is evidence that the Cello Sonata had been performed a month earlier (November 24th) by Hausmann, in Vienna.

The modern attributes of the program not only put the public on trial, but Hubay and Popper as well. But Brahms expressed great confidence in these activities.

Popper must have experienced an ordeal during the performance of the *F Major Cello Sonata* in partnership with Brahms, whose reputation as a pianist was one of power. I once asked Popper how Brahms rated as a pianist. His reply was that there were quite a few inaccuracies "in spite of his great pianistic technique," adding, "and he was loud, too!"

With this first trio program and the quartet concert preceding, the new organization undertook to fulfill those standards which Liszt had proclaimed in 1874, and which Hubay had assumed when he accepted the invitation from the government. But they provided much fuel for the wrath of the anti-foreign press: the musicians Herzfeld, Eldering, Popper, Leschetizky and Brahms were all foreigners who joined with a single Hungarian violinist to win the approval of local music lovers.

The third concert of the organization—a quartet concert on January 1, 1887—received very cautious comment, apparently from a faction strongly opposed to Germanic educational influence: ". . . only the future will tell how much Hungary had gained by these artists' participation in Hungary's musical life . . ."[3]

Rehearsals were held in Popper's spacious apartment, where invited guests often attended dress rehearsals listening from the next room. Brahms frequently played with Hubay and Popper. He once commented that he had great pleasure playing with them because they played at first

Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler noted pianist, appeared on the Hubay-Popper quartet and trio programs. Madame Bloomfield-Zeisler studied with Leschetizky (1878-83) and from 1883 until 1893 she played annually in the United States.

sight with unsurpassed artistic flair. Popper claimed that their friendly relationship remained always cordial, in spite of Brahms' "abrupt manners and inaccurate piano playing." Popper had enthusiasm and empathy in understanding of Brahms' music, making Brahms—with his crusty manner—a life-long friend.

Many other outstanding pianists were presented on the Hubay-Popper quartet and trio programs. These included: Backhaus, Madame Bloomfield-Zeisler (the American pianist), Brandeis, Dohnányi, Friedmann, Godowsky, Lamond, Leschetizky, Paderewski, Polonyi, Reisenauer, Stavenhagen, Székely, Thomán and others.

Long after, in a speech at the opening of the season in September, 1913, Hubay paid tribute to Popper following his death on August 9th of that year. The speech was published in *Zeneközlöny* of October 15, 1913. Hubay discussed some of the aspects of Popper's musical nature, and indicated in what ways Popper had been of particular influence. Telling of the first organization of the string department, Hubay said:

". . . I realized that the low level of the musical culture demanded a boost—a serious task that could be successful only if the world-famous artists could be persuaded to settle in Budapest. Popper accepted the invitation, and from the very beginning he supported with loving care every effort which served the flowering of the Hungarian art . . ."

He spoke of him as "an ideal chamber-musician," and praised his choices from the classic masterpieces as "of the highest order . . ." because of his profound knowledge of these works. He discussed Popper's response to the moderns as selective, and that in general ". . . it was hard to persuade him to play the more advanced modern music." He said he held Brahms in high esteem, and was "interested in Tchaikovsky."

It can be discerned from this that Popper had exerted considerable influence on the repertoire of the Hubay-Popper chamber music organization. The twenty-two programs available today, dated from 1886 to 1912 (an incomplete list) shows a diverse choice of works—progressive, but with the traditional classic material in the foreground. The new directions of romantic and modern composers—other than Brahms—were represented by Tchaikovsky, Volkmann, Rubinstein, Juon, Bruckner, Dvorak, Smetana, Goldmark, Franck, Josef Bloch (Hungarian), Aggházy, the young Dohnányi, and Popper's own new string quartet. Brahms was represented with fourteen compositions. Mendelssohn, Schumann, Haydn, Mozart and Schubert were often played as was Beethoven, with eleven compositions, mostly late opuses. These programs were not much different from the old Hellmesberger days, or from a pro-

Hans Wihan was among the cellists on the list of Wolff-represented artists, which had grown in number by 1888. David Popper's name was missing from this list; perhaps because his duties in Budapest prevented him from extended travel.

On the facing page: A dominant cello talent of Popper's day, Julius Klengel, and his class in Leipzig, 1921. Mischa Schneider with the cello; the bearded man behind Schneider is Klengel.

gram of the present day: solid selection from the classics, with a flexible choice from the newer generation of composers.

Admittedly, Popper could never understand Bartók's music. He held Bartók's musical potential very high, but felt that the young challenger belonged in the new wave of the twentieth century. Hubay said that he often expressed the sentiment that ". . . I am now only devoted to the old masters . . ." Many years later—in 1904—Hubay was to perform Bartók's *Sonata for Violin and Piano* with the composer on a program in the chamber music series.

Popper was forty-four years old, when his son, Leo, was born. The experience of having his son brought up in his home, under the mother's care, intensified the feeling of a "home," and was in great contrast to the constant moving about, with or without a professional wife, coping with a wife's career of foremost importance, and having a daughter placed in the care of foster parents soon after her birth.

His mind was at peace. The association with the Music Academy on a permanent basis assured him of comfort, and enough leisure time to concentrate on composition. At the same time, he was relatively free from the stresses of travel, as he had opportunities for performing concerts, and for chamber music appearances, in his "hometown."

From his armchair he could easily review the concert field of Europe, scanning over the weekly reports in the pages of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and other music journals for news of what compositions by David Popper had been played by whom, and where, and when? He gradually came to realize that from the year 1870 on, practically all the cellists in Europe performed his pieces—from Grützmacher (dean of cellists, teacher, composer, transcriber, chambermusic player, in Dresden) on through all the dominant cello talents of the day: Becker, Klengel, Gerardy, Hollmann, Cossmann, and many more. It was also pleasant to discover that eleven violinists had transcribed for their instrument, played, and in some cases published, Popper's most effective works.

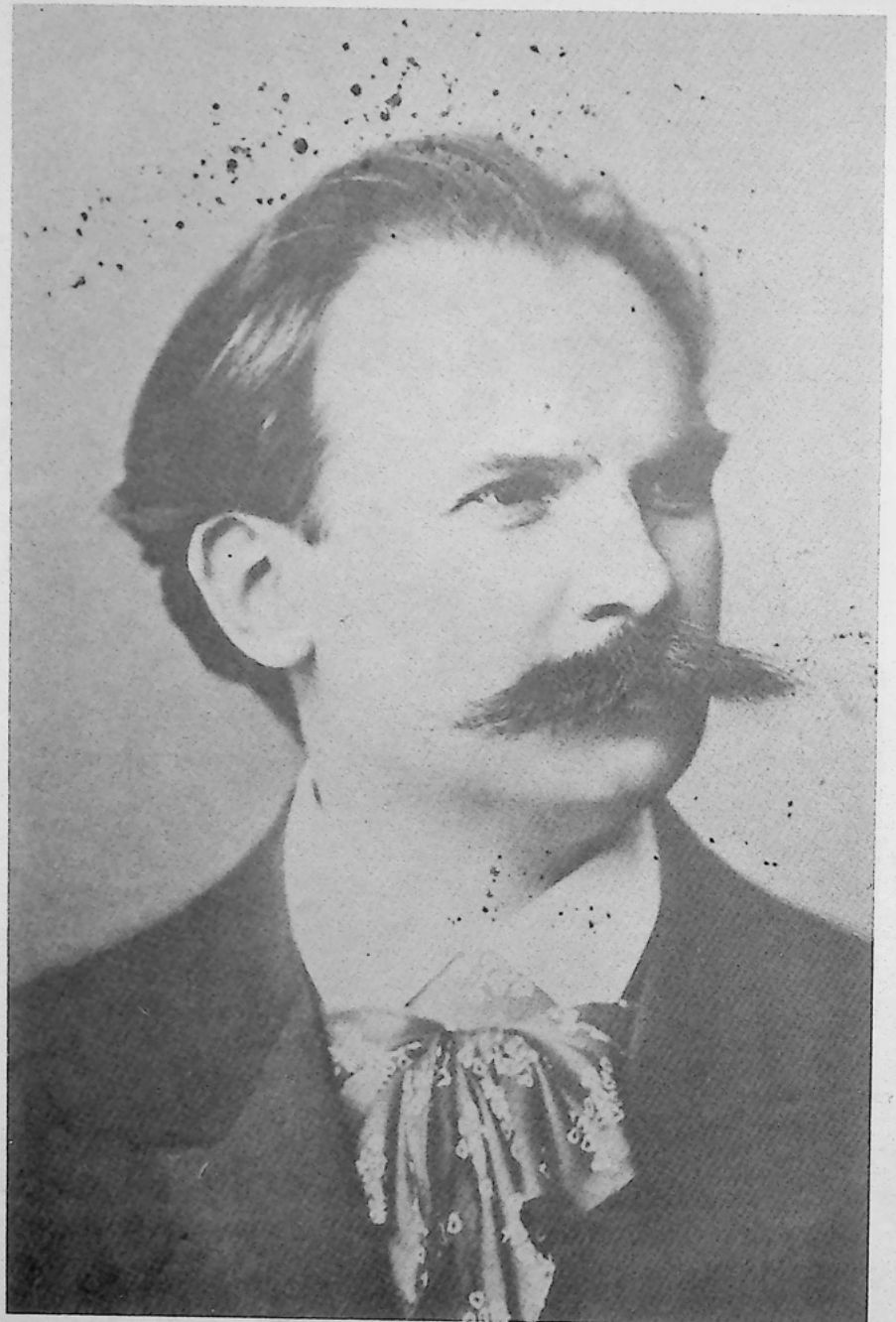
When Hermann Wolff, composer and pianist, opened his concert management bureau in 1881, he had just a short time previously been active as editor of the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* and as co-editor of the *Musikwelt* (also in Berlin). He was also a gifted businessman: the very strong agency he started continued till 1935. By 1886 he was representing twenty-two important pianists—among them Bülow, Rubinstein, d'Albert, Saint-Saëns, Leschetizky and Menter—fourteen violinists, including Auer, Joachim, Neruda, Ondricek, Sauret and Hubay, and five cellists: Becker, Grünfeld, Hausmann, Klengel and Popper.

By 1888 the list of his artists had grown in number. To the cellists were added Grützmacher, Wihan, Smidt, Alwin Schröder, and the two ladies

German pianist Bernard Stavenhager (above) in a drawing by Joseph Müller, was one of Liszt's last pupils (1885-86) and appeared on the Hubay-Popper programs. Leopold Godowsky (below) famous pianist and protegé of Camille Saint-Saëns, appeared on the Hubay-Popper programs.

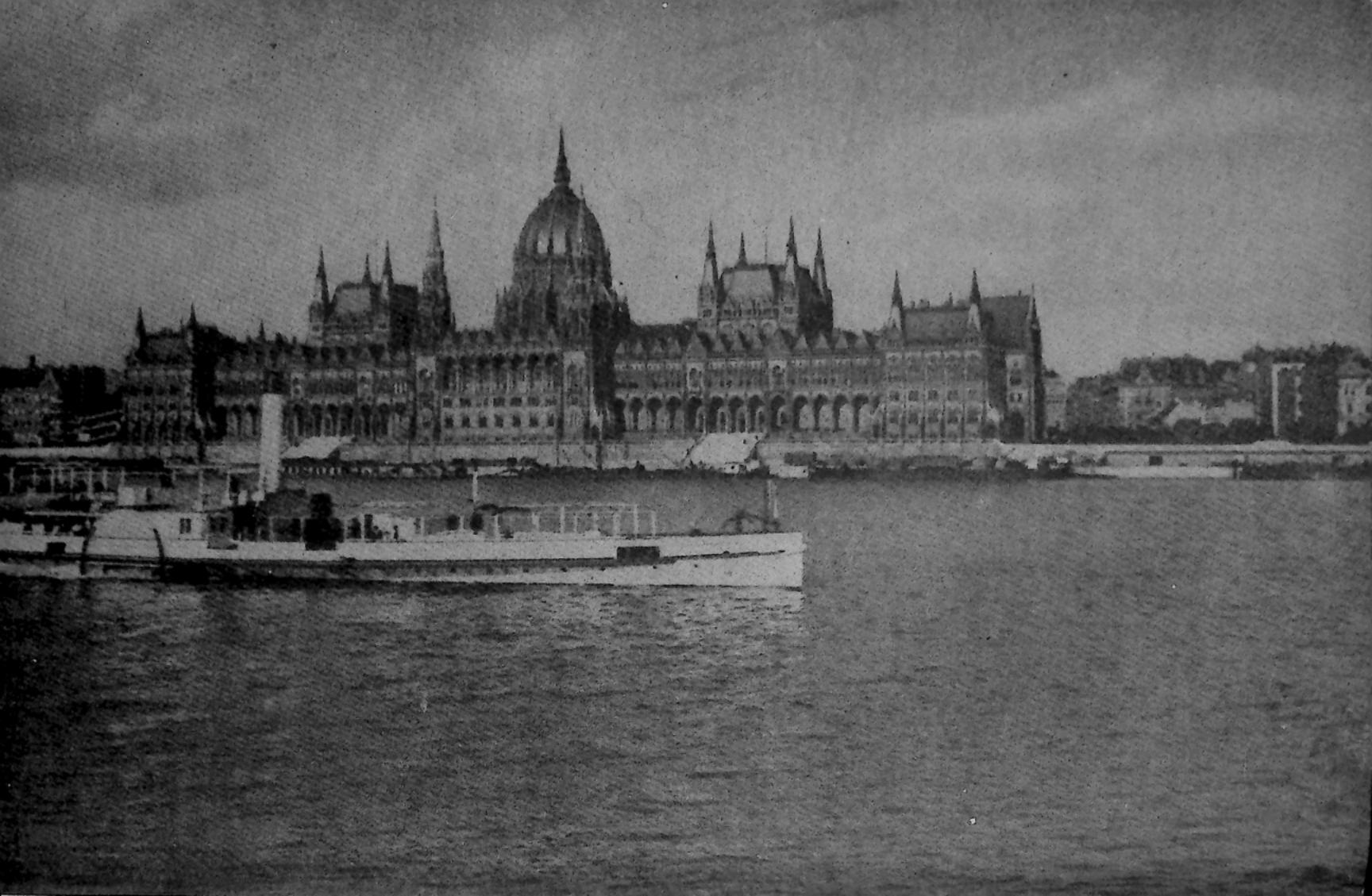
Theodore Leschetizky (above) great Austrian pianist, famous pedagogue and composer, appeared on the Hubay-Popper programs. German pianist and composer Alfred Reisenauer (below) was presented on the Hubay-Popper quartet and trio programs.

Emile Sauret was one of fourteen violinists managed by Hermann Wolff's concert bureau in 1886.



Eugene d'Albert, one of many artists represented by Hermann Wolff's concert management bureau opened in 1881.

Franz Ondricek was represented by Hermann Wolff, composer and pianist, through his concert management bureau.



Adeline Hanf-Metzdorff and Lucy Campbell. But from this list Popper's name was missing. Doubtless he had found that he could not carry the load of extended travel, and could not leave Budapest long enough for a major tour.

Although the new generation of cellists continued to perform Popper pieces, other and more recent modern works which had at first seemed experimental in style and character were now appearing on concert programs.

In this wave of challenging new music, the Schumann *Concerto,* and the Saint-Saëns *Concerto* (more slowly accepted) were followed by the Lalo *Concerto,* Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations,* and the *Concertos* by Dvorak, d'Albert, and Dohnányi.

Popper felt no inclination to embrace the new concertos and neglect his own. Since he had first performed his *E minor Concerto* with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig in 1879, he had played it all over the continent. The time seemed ripe for his new *Concerto in G Major.*

On March 9, 1888, he gave its first performance, with the Budapest Philharmonic. The program included another "first"—Goldmark's *Spring Overture,* conducted by the composer. The *Concerto* was received with polite enthusiasm—but not strong enough for Popper to re-invade Europe with this work.

But an old-new concerto was republished in 1890 by Breitkopf and Härtel—a concerto close to his heart and liking: *Concerto in D Major* (Op. 101) by Haydn, re-arranged and re-orchestrated by Gewaert. With this Concerto Popper was lured back to a partial suitcase—hotel life, which began in Munich and continued for seventeen years—the last period of his life as a concert artist.

George Bernard Shaw did not hear Popper until 1891. A year earlier he wrote, "I am not fond of the violoncello; ordinarily I had just as soon hear a bee buzzing in a stone jug . . ."[4] Popper would soon return to England, and Shaw would find a new enthusiasm for the cello.

[1]Fifty years later, in commemoration of this event, Bartók wrote his famous "Dance Suite," Kodály the "Psalmus Hungaricus," and Dohnányi the "Ruralia Hungarica."

[2]Kornél Szokolay, *Ország Világ (State and the World)* (Budapest) October 16, 1886.

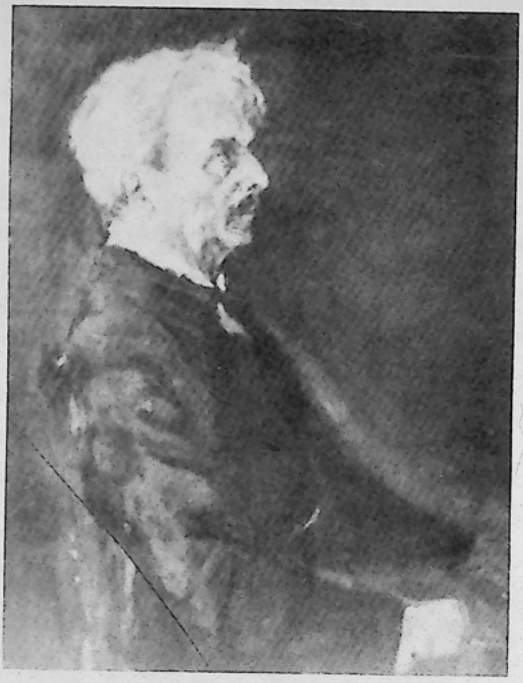
[3]*Magyar* Szalón (Budapest), January, 1887.

[4]*World* (London), January, 1890.

On the facing page: The cities of Pest, on the east, and Buda, on the west, facing each other across the Danube, were first united by the building of a bridge between 1839 and 1849, and in 1872 were combined into a much larger civic unit, now called Budapest.

Chapter XIII

Triumphs and Tribulations



A painting of David Popper by his son, Leo.

The authenticity of Haydn's *D Major Concerto* for violoncello had been questioned for the many years following its publication, which was quite some time after the composer's death in 1809. There existed the doubt whether it was the work of Haydn himself, or of his first cellist in the orchestra at the court of Esterházy, Anton Krafft, and for this reason it had received less interest among cellists than the *B flat Major Concerto* by Haydn's contemporary, Boccherini.

The first publication of the concerto, by Johann André of Offenbach, was probably in the early 1840's. Arrangement and editing were done by two important cellists, George Goltermann and R.E. Bockmühl, ". . . after the original manuscript of the Author." This declaration by the publisher did not alleviate the prevalent skepticism. It was well-known that many compositions had been issued by unscrupulous publishers falsely, under Haydn's name because of his popularity—especially string quartets, for which there was an eager market among amateur musicians. André had good reason to have the editing done by two reputable musicians. They kept the orchestration as it was in the original: strings, two oboes, and two horns.

In Volume II of Richard Pohl's Biography of Haydn, Pohl comments that the concerto was inspired by solo cellists in his Esterházy orchestra—Weigl, Küffel, Marteau, and later, Krafft.

In 1946 the musicologist, Karl Geiringer, wrote in his book on Haydn, that the great Mozart scholar Ludwig Köchel had seen the original manuscript, bearing Haydn's signature and the date 1783 in the private collection of Julius Rietz, in Dresden—formerly a pupil of Bernhard Romberg.

In 1890 F. A. Gewaert, Belgian composer and musicologist rearranged the work, and augmented the orchestration with two flutes, two clarinets, and two bassoons. Breitkopf and Härtel published it, including Gewaert's cadenza for the solo instrument. Popper became interested in the concerto, and within a few months he had prepared it for a concert in Munich, which took place late in the year 1890. Popper replaced Gewaert's cadenza with one of his own writing, which was more suitable for the solo instrument, and which the critic described as "a better offering." The press devoted quite an extensive review to the concerto and to the performer, particularly because of the controversy concerning the authenticity of the work.

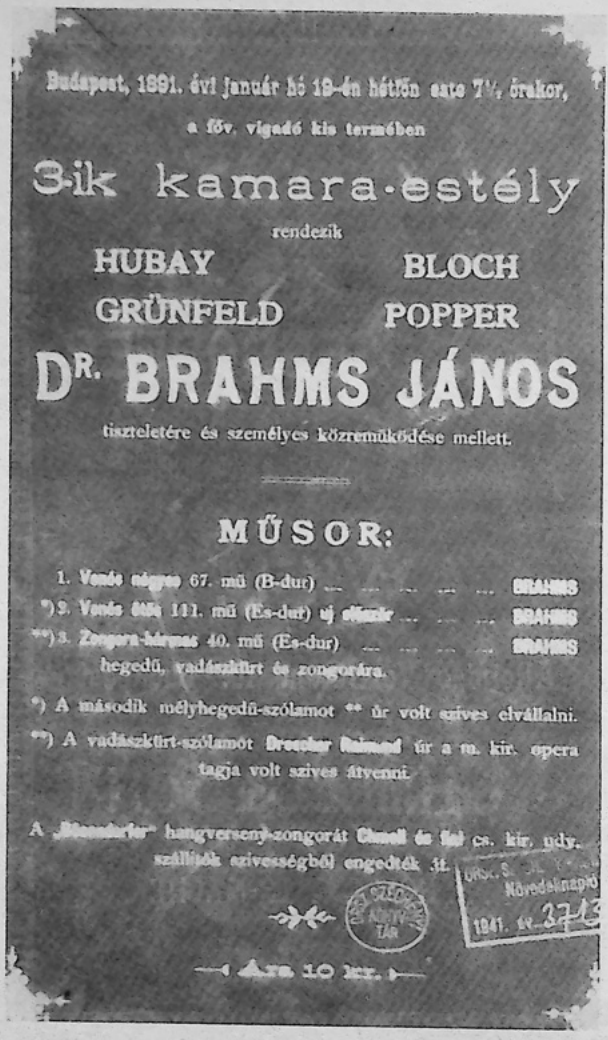
"Herr Popper's presentation of the recently published concerto by Haydn was masterful. We are especially grateful for this new edition because the subject is of great interest . . . Among the sixteen concertos which Haydn wrote, this is the ninth, and the last of the five cello concertos in chronological order . . . The orchestration is excellent . . . (Popper) shortened the last movement, and altered a few measures in the coda. Like every performance of Herr Popper we ever heard, it was excellent.

"How splendid it is that in this uncomplicated concerto the solo never digresses from the individual character of the instrument, never climbs into the high range of the violin, nor exhibits those unaesthetic howling octave passages which are so well-liked by new cello composers. One finds throughout this work a controlled and genuine artistic repose and solidity . . . Herr Popper further proved his extraordinary interpretative art in the beautifully played 'Traumerei' by Schumann, his own 'Spinning Song' and the poetic 'Berceuse' . . ."

The Haydn *Concerto* soon became part of the standard repertoire of every cellist, and the work was recognized as one of Haydn's masterpieces, greatly enriching the limited violoncello solo literature.

After the Munich concert Popper returned to Budapest and resumed his regular mode of life, but not for very long. He was to appear with the "new" Haydn *Concerto* in the year 1891, in January in Frankfurt, in February in Hamburg, and in October in Prague, and in November he would tour England and Scotland.

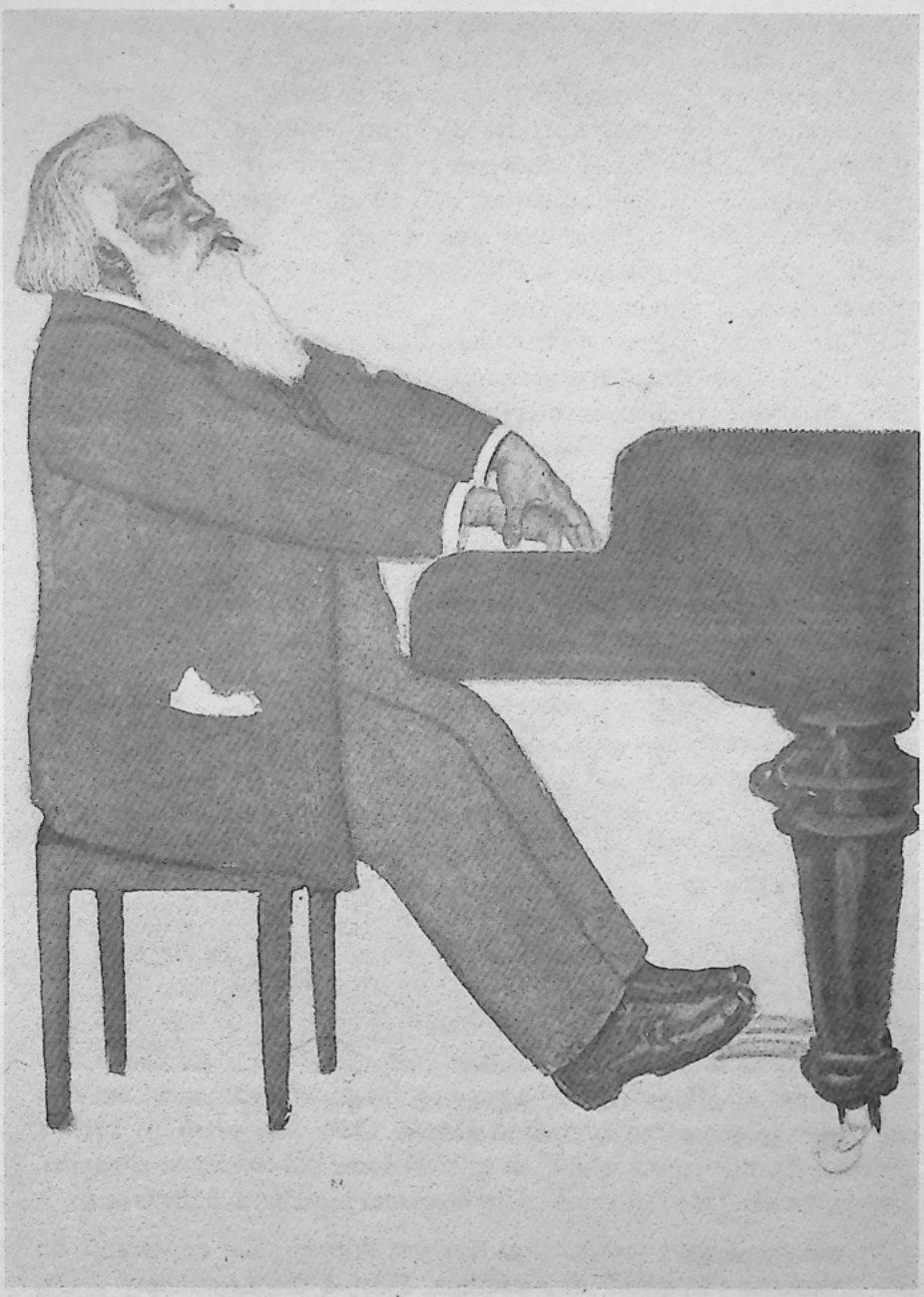
On January 19th the Hubay-Popper Quartet gave the third chamber music concert of the 1890-1891 season, devoted entirely to Brahms'


Budapest, 1891. évi január hó 19-én hétfőn este 7½ órakor,
a főv. vigadó kis termében
3ik kamara-estély
rendezik
HUBAY BLOCH
GRÜNFELD POPPER
DR. BRAHMS JÁNOS
tiszteletére és személyes közreműködése mellett.
MŰSOR:
1. Vonós négyes 67. mű (B-dur) ... ... BRAHMS
*)2. Vonós ötös 111. mű (Es-dur) új műnek ... ... BRAHMS
**)3. Zongora-kürtös 40. mű (Es-dur) ... ... BRAHMS
hegedű, vadászkürt és zongorára.
*) A második mélyhegedű-szólamot ** úr volt szíves elvállalni.
**) A vadászkürt-szólamot Drescher Raimund úr a m. kir. opera tagja volt szíves átvenni.
A „Bösendorfer" hangversenyzongorát Chmell és fiai cs. kir. udv. szállítók szívességből engedték át.
Ára 10 kr.

Hubay-Popper Quartet program featuring Brahms in the Horn Trio *(Opus 40), 1891.*

works, and with Brahms participating as pianist in the *Horn Trio* (Op. 40). Raimund Drescher, the first hornist from the opera, was engaged for this number.

The concert opened with the joyous *String Quartet* (Op. 67), followed by the *String Quintet* (Op. 111), which had been first performed in Vienna two months before. This gay and richly melodious work led to the *Horn Trio,* the closing number of the concert. Brahms had played the horn as a boy, and his fondness for the instrument had inspired this unprecedented instrumental combination. The *Trio* provided a festive climax to an evening of musical celebration, honoring the Master. (Brahms was then fifty-eight years old).



A famous lithographed caricature of Brahms smoking a cigar while seated at the piano.

As usual, the rehearsal for this concert was at Popper's apartment, and after the rehearsal, as was her custom, Mrs. Popper served little sandwiches and cherry wine, which heightened the congenial atmosphere of the gathering. The writer once asked Popper about his friendship with Brahms. He spoke of those rehearsals at his apartment with a nostalgic tone in his voice—of the stimulating, interesting company and the inspiring music of Brahms. Those days seemed high points in the lives of the participating artists, whose work and enjoyment were combined in mutual harmony and congeniality.

In late January Popper was in Frankfurt to play on the "Museum Concerts." This was his fifth appearance with the orchestra. His first, in 1875, had been a performance of the Volkmann *Concerto*. In 1881 he had played his own E minor *Concerto*, in 1882 the Boccherini, in 1884 the Saint-Saëns, and now in 1891 he was presenting the Haydn.

The criticism from Frankfurt commented first upon Popper's performance of his own works:

"The tenth Museum Concert in Frankfurt this month offered only one soloist, but the best representative of his profession. Among the cello virtuosos of the present time, David Popper is the charming raconteur, the refined musician, with a special predilection for the musical language of the salons. The sparkling and piquant tones, without particular depth of meaning, nevertheless find their way to the heart.

"Because of the limitations of the artistic production of the modern violoncello repertoire, Popper has devoted himself to composing, and has found success with his smaller pieces. On Friday the program exhibited two of these ornate musical works: the 'Berceuse' (Op. 62), and the often heard 'Spinning Song'—a first class virtuoso piece. Popper played this as encore, with such glittering skill as only a master can command. He acknowledged the thunderous ovation from the audience with Schumann's 'Traumerei.'

"With his art, Popper paid homage to the grand tradition of the concert halls, in the recently revived Haydn *Cello Concerto* (Op. 101)—a gentle and tender piece which, in spite of some old-fashioned elements, one cannot deny is a reflection of the characteristic charm of its creator."[1]

No one could have realized that this was Popper's last appearance on the "Museum Concerts" in Frankfurt. During the Löwenberg years, Popper had received great assistance from Bülow, but from now on, Bülow seemed to use his influence against him. On February 16th Popper repeated the same concert as in Frankfurt in Hamburg under Bülow's conducting. There is no record of the press reviews. But in a letter which Bülow wrote to his daughter the next day, he reveals his own

Brahm's String Quartet *(Opus 67),* String Quintet *(Opus 111) and* Horn Trio *(Opus 40) were given on the January 1891 Hubay-Popper program in the Master's honor.*

Hugo Becker played Popper's "Elfentanz" everywhere—often with demands from the audience that he repeat it.

arrangements with the Frankfurt "Museum Concerts," his surprising new prejudice toward Popper, his intolerance of some other persons who had caused him certain irritation, and his new interest in another successful cellist:

"You may have suspected that I was doing considerable wirepulling behind the scenes in the matter of the Frankfurt conductorship. Your suspicions were correct. My candidate—who is Herr Kogel's appointment will enable me, health permitting, to accept an invitation to play at the Museum concerts next season . . .[2]

"Last night I was reminded vividly of my favorite Frankfurter 'cellist, Hugo Becker. Popper, the Viennese Jew, was whining and playing the charlatan with such appalling bad taste that I fell into the state to which you are reduced when you hear of certain lady penitents' bouquets. If you see Becker, give him my kindest regards and tell him I am looking forward very, very much to playing the last Beethoven 'cello sonata' with him at Bremen on April 7, and will he please play his part by heart too? Perhaps we might repeat the performance in your town some time in aid of the Arthur memorial and to spite that poisonous mummy Wilhelm Jordan, who really deserves nothing better than to be hymned by B. Scholz . . ."[3]

During his entire brilliant career as pianist and conductor Bülow was burdened with a long incurable illness which grew gradually worse. The

resulting erratic conditions were unpredictable, with exhibitions of rudeness, acid sarcasm and insulting behavior toward individuals, orchestras and audiences.

His divorce from Cosima Liszt, when she left him to marry Richard Wagner, the genius whom he adored, greatly aggravated his condition.

The first unpleasant incident between Bülow and Popper of which we know occurred in 1867. In the constant competition for concert engagements, it was customary for artists to seek patronage from people of influence and power. Based on his own experience Popper considered Bülow a benefactor of young musicians. He suggested to a friend who was in need of assistance that he contact Bülow in writing and ask for his goodwill. Bülow wrote to an unknown party a letter of which the following outburst is a part:

". . . Why should people bother me about patronizing concert candidates? Well, I do think though, that Popper brought about the involvement and shortly thereafter wrote a letter from which can be quoted this passage: 'Nothing causes me more discomfort than when one spoils my best intentions through ignorance of circumstances.' Terribly true!"

Popper's reaction was mild, but their relationship froze, as had happened with many other of Bülow's associations.

Bülow had developed a great liking for the cellist Hugo Becker, whom he described as "the only cellist who can play like a man," Hugo Becker was twenty-one years younger than Popper, and his admirer, both as artist and as composer. For decades, from his very early start as concert cellist, Becker had played many of Popper's pieces on his programs. When Popper played the Haydn *Concerto* in Frankfurt, in 1891, Becker was solo cellist at the opera in that city. He became a member of the Heermann Quartet, and a teacher at the Hoch Conservatory. His fame as virtuoso of top rank was widespread, and he toured Europe and America with great success.

Becker played Popper's "Elfentanz" everywhere—often with demands from the audience that he repeat it. In his essay, "Marginal Observations on Elfentanz," he wrote an analysis of the proper performance of this piece warning that the work is more than just a technical display of dexterity. The colorful shading of dynamics in this witty charming piece, descriptive of dancing elves, must be mastered. In conclusion Becker says that those who heard Popper play this "Elfentanz" can appreciate the difference in style and interpretation from those other performances which put too much emphasis on speed instead of on style and beauty of sound.

The enthusiastic reference about Popper's performance of the Volk-

mann *Concerto* which Bülow had given to Raff in his letter of 1864, when contrasted with his letter to his daughter in 1891, provides shocking proof of Bülow's changing states of mind. In spite of this unsavory episode, fair judgment is due to the great musician Bülow. A week following his death on February 12, 1894, in Cairo, a reception was held in Paris by Ambroise Thomas the Director of the Conservatory, honoring Anton Rubinstein. The conversation turned to Bülow, and Rubinstein was asked, from every side, about his relationships and experiences with this remarkable man and artist. His response was thoughtful:

"With Bülow I fared no better nor worse than many other musicians . . . one day I was his idol; the next day he put his fingers to his forehead pretending not to remember me, saying, 'Rubinstein, Rubinstein, who is that?' A strong antagonism regarding our conceptions of art always stood between us. It is possible that once in a conversation I spoke my views that Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner had brought more harm than good to the music world, expressing myself perhaps too briskly. There may have been some charming go-between efforts made by some individuals to distort my words—Enough! I know that lately he would become easily irritated whenever someone mentioned my name to him.

"I pity this martyr with all my heart. I had not known that a brain tumor was the cause for all his eccentricities. It drained his mind, causing him to make a spectacle of himself. Bülow's enemies, especially in Paris, called him a quack (cabotin). This is incorrect. Everything can be explained as caused by physical breakdown, and everything forgiven. There is no man who does not have faults . . . The world should appreciate having a man with such great qualities and fine attributes . . ."[4]

Popper experienced a shock when Gustav Mahler was dismissed from his post as Director of the Budapest Opera, on February 15, 1891. The Superintendent Beniczky had approached Popper and the well-known music theorist Guido Adler—a founder of the Wagner Society in Vienna—to jointly advise him in the choice of a Director, and they both suggested Mahler. But in 1891, the new Superintendent of the state theatres, Count Zichy, expressed dissatisfaction with the management of the opera house, because of the foreign elements.

Though Mahler advocated that operas should be given in Hungarian, he had his problems with singers, particularly the Wagnerian singers, who learned their roles in the original language. Mahler had intended to learn Hungarian himself, but had not yet managed it, and still had to rehearse in German.

Zichy decided that all artistic matters must be approved by himself. Mahler would not tolerate this interference. His ten year contract

Count Zichy (above), Superintendent of the state theatres in Budapest, rejected Gustav Mahler as the proposed Director of the Budapest Opera. Popper and music theorist Guido Adler (below) jointly advised Superintendent Beniczky in the choice of a Director of the Budapest Opera.

Karl Flesch described the state of musical affairs in London as of 1901 as requiring patience and perserverance.

specifically gave him a free hand in directing the artistic destinies of the opera.

Behind the scenes the anti-German faction made frequent attacks on Mahler, similar to those of which Popper was also the recipient, before, and continuing into later years. A more pointed comment made by Zichy at the "National Club" reverberated in the city: "This Jewish Temple (the opera) must be made into a Temple of Art." Mahler was unceremoniously required to leave.

The drama of Mahler's firing received an international airing, and the loss of an outstanding conductor was deplored in Hungarian and foreign papers. In the fall of 1891, on Bülow's recommendation, Mahler took, over the Hamburg Opera, and stayed in that position for six years, after which he became, for the next ten years, Director of the Court Opera in Vienna.

On May 5, 1891, Popper learned of his father's death in Prague. He immediately rushed to the funeral, which took place on the 7th. How different was his mood on this train ride from other times when he was carried from country to country and from one concert to the next! While the train rumbled to Prague, we can be sure that his mind was full of memories of his father's whole life, in perspective.

When Angelus Popper died he was chief Cantor of Prague, and Rector of the Cantors of Bohemia. A faded newspaper obituary clipping, which had been saved by Popper, is on this writer's desk. By various routes it arrived here, finally, from Popper's own desk drawer.

The eulogy describes the active half-century of faithful service by the Cantor. And it tells of the funeral, attended by the dignitaries of the religious hierarchy of the community paying final respect to a very much loved man.

Others present at the ritual were David's brother William, his two married sisters, and his mother, the Cantor's widow, who would follow her husband to the grave the following year.

In 1864, following his Berlin concert with Bülow, Popper played in Leipzig, Breslau, Prague and London, receiving "more than the usual recognition." Even so, the reaction by the London public and press must not have been sufficient encouragement for him to return to England very soon. Flesch describes the state of musical affairs in London as of 1901, in a very enlightening way:

"At that time I did not know that two qualities were absolutely essential to the conquest of the artistic world in England—patience and perseverance. Lightning successes are unusually rare with British audiences, while slow but constant hammering of a name into their consciousness make them esteem and later love an artist, to whom they will then remain loyal . . .

"At the turn of the century London was still of secondary importance in artistic regard . . ."[5]

In the fall of 1891 Popper was engaged for twenty-nine concert appearances in a tour of Scotland, England and Ireland. Preceding the London concerts, he was heard on November 3rd in Edinburgh, Scotland. The critic reported that, although Sarasate had drawn a full house for a concert a week before, Paderewski's concert which had followed, and the trio concert on which Popper appeared were less well attended, and commented:

"To 'cello players the concert was one of exceptional interest, inasmuch as Herr David Popper, whose fame as a composer for that instrument is world-wide, appeared for the first time in this country . . . A large number of local 'cello players were present to hear Herr Popper who, besides being *par excellence* the composer of classical pieces for his instrument among living musicians, is by repute an executant of unequalled wealth of resource . . . He is far and away the greatest exponent of the art of 'cello-playing who has ever appeared in Edinburgh being, in a sense, of historic interest . . ."[6]

His companions were Isaac Albeniz, composer and solo pianist to the Queen of Spain, and E. Fernandez Arbos, concert violinist and professor at the Madrid Conservatory—both strangers to Scotland, and both famous Spanish artists. In addition to a trio by Mendelssohn, each of them played a group of solos. Popper's pieces were *Adagio* from a *Sonata* by Rubinstein, "Berceuse," "Spinningsong" and "Elfentanz" of his own composition, and as encores his "Spanish Dance" and the "Traumerei" by Schumann.

Many cellists were frequent visitors to England. By his participation in the musical life of London which he had begun in 1846 and which would continue till 1898, Piatti had set a standard of excellence for cellists, who realized they would be greeted by seasoned audiences and critics when performing there.

Popper had not been in England since 1864. His concertizing energies and time had been spent in Germany, Russia, and the rest of Europe. But his fame had continued to grow in England, as his pieces were on the programs of every cellist—a circumstance which greatly irritated George Bernard Shaw.

Popper's E minor *Concerto* was scheduled on his program for November 10, 1891, in the Crystal Palace, under Sir August Manns. Due to transportation difficulties, Popper was unable to reach the hall in time for a full rehearsal, and it was decided to omit the last two movements, which would have had to be performed without rehearsal. Shaw wrote of the occasion:

". . . Popper duly made his appearance, and proved quite as fine a violoncellist as his great reputation had led us all to expect . . ."

But of the *Concerto*, he said, ". . . I was puzzled by its abrupt ending after what I had supposed to be only the first movement. I now find that I was right . . . Mr. Manns was anxious to explain to the audience, but Popper has an objection—rather unusual in the profession—to have a fuss made about him . . ."[7]

Another critical comment on the same performance at the Crystal Palace said:

". . . Herr Popper . . . fully justified the high expectations which had been formed of his abilities . . . His tone . . . is both sweet and silky, while his technique is of the first order . . . he might not inaptly be styled the Sarasate of the violoncello . . ."[8]

We have further remarks from Shaw in November, in the *Bredford Observer:*

"D. Popper, the famous violoncellist . . . gave a concert . . . and played

several compositions of his own. All somewhat slight, elegant, and finished, occasionally reminding one of Bizet, though without Bizet's originality. Popper's playing more than justifies his great reputation."

Shaw also refers to a chamber music concert on November 21, 1891, in which Popper substituted for the ailing Piatti, and also played several of his own compositions. And he tells of another concert which Popper gave:

". . . on Wednesday last, at which he performed a good deal of his own music, which is elegant and fanciful in its lighter phases, and elegiac on its sentimental side . . . There is no lack of novelty about his style to Londoners, and he is, on his own plane, the best player in the world, as far as we know here . . ."[9]

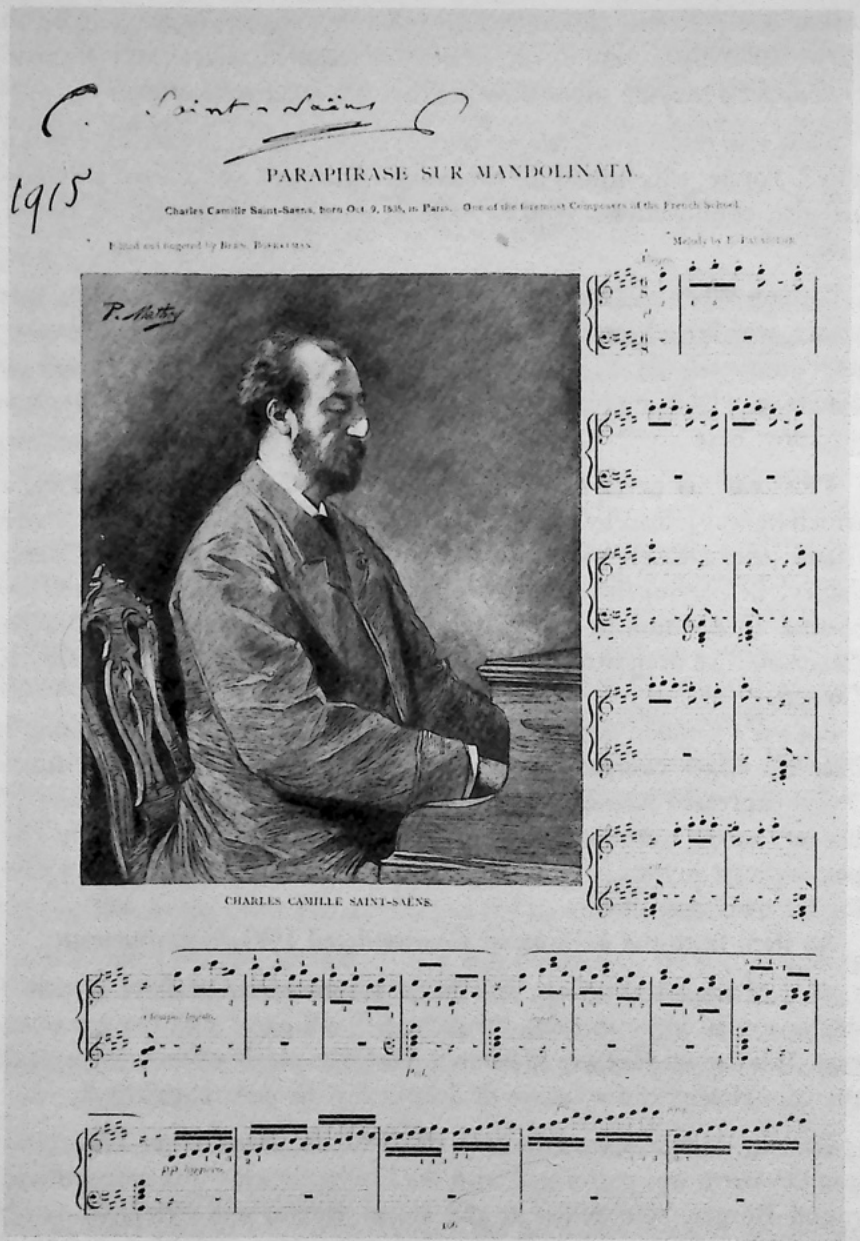
This was his performance at St. James Hall on November 25th, at which he was joined by the English cellist Edward Howell and by his old friend Jules Delsart, the successor of Franchomme at the Paris Conservatory, in playing his composition *Requiem for Three Cellos and Orchestra.* In addition he played his *Im Walde* Suite and the Saint-Saëns *Concerto.* The orchestra was conducted by the British conductor F. H. Cowen.

Popper's London concerts of this season were the first opportunity to hear his larger compositions there. The critic of the London *Musical Times* expressed feelings of ". . . mingled satisfaction and surprise . . ." because of the introduction of ". . . two important works . . ." by Popper, hitherto known in London for his composition of ". . . minor solos for his own instrument . . ."

An item from the *Manchester Courier* dated 1891, is enthusiastic:

". . . Popper's mastery of his instrument is perfect, which is demonstrated in performing the most difficult parts with the greatest of ease. It is a great pleasure to listen to him. His playing was enjoyment for the connoisseur and a source of delight for the general public."

Back in Budapest, on February 10, 1892, the *Requiem for Three Cellos and Orchestra* was performed with the Philharmonic—this time with Sigmund Bürger, solo cellist at the Royal Opera, and Friedrich Grützmacher II, a nephew of the famous Dresden cellist, and also a member of the Opera Orchestra. The conductor was Alexander Erkel. On the same program Popper played the solo part of Volkmann's *Serenade* with the string orchestra.

Later in the year 1892 Popper and Stephen Thomán, the thirty-year old former pupil of Liszt who, in 1888, had taken over the piano department of the Academy, joined in a concert tour of Italy and Turkey.

C. Saint-Saëns
1915
PARAPHRASE SUR MANDOLINATA
Charles Camille Saint-Saens, born Oct. 9, 1835, in Paris. One of the foremost Composers of the French School.
Edited and fingered by Jean Bottesini
Melody by F. Paolantoni
P. Nadar
CHARLES CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS.

Saint-Saëns' Concerto *was performed at Popper's fourth appearance on the "Museum Concerts" in Frankfurt, 1884.*

Thomán was highly esteemed as teacher and pianist. A joyful and surprising episode, described in an old clipping, took place on the occasion of a concert in Venice. Popper was received with true Italian exuberance by the pupils of the Liceo Benedetto Marcello, where the concert took place. When he finished the last number on the program, a tremendous fanfare of trumpets was heard, from players located just under the window of the concert hall of the Liceo. The paper related that the "hot-blooded" students had enlisted the trumpet players from the band in the St. Mark's Piazza—where they had played their own concert earlier that evening.

With the trumpet fanfare, hundreds of voices exploded: "Evviva il grande Maestro Popper!" The artist, overwhelmed by this enthusiasm, directed the following words (in Italian) to the audience:

"The love of the Fatherland is the most powerful and most noble emotion which God planted in the hearts of men. But the land of music is Italy, and in this sense I am your compatriot. I enthusiastically exclaim with you: 'Evviva la Patria, Evviva!' " After these inspired words the stormy ovation seemed endless.

The program which they performed in Venice was very likely little changed throughout the tour. As they were both professors from the Academy they had to move fast and get back to Budapest in reasonable time, so chances to practice between engagements would have been scarce.[10]

At some time in the season of 1892 Popper performed again in Prague, as witnessed by the following article:

"This brilliant virtuoso does not need any publicity. He is today the foremost artist, who sets the style in cello music. We do not need to mention this fact.

"But not only his virtuosity on the cello secures him a leading position in the history of music. All critics, who from time to time have to browse through compositions, realize how poor the cello literature has been for a concert instrument, and what importance the cello has gained since Popper's artistic style rose on the musical horizon. Only Popper succeeded in elevating the instrument above the sphere of pure melody and short-lived cantilenas, by including characteristics and moods for our modern musical needs, in powerful performances. But the master was not content to strike Promethean sparks from dead stone—what he could not find he replaced by his rich inventiveness. He became the creator of an entirely new cello literature.

"As usual Popper definitely won a triumph, with his unequaled beauty of tone, richness of detail, and the strong soulful quality which contributes so undeniably to his great success . . .

"He won the hearts of the whole audience with the noble interpretation of 'Du bist die Ruh' . . . Each word of the song was spoken convincingly through the strings of his cello. As far as the precision and greatness of his virtuosity are concerned, both were clearly evident in the group of his own compositions: 'Vito,' 'Andalouse,' 'Menuett' and 'Papillon.' Among a hundred cellists ninety-nine would most likely singe their wings with this piece. Professor Popper received rapturous applause . . ."[11]

Another journey away from Budapest took place in 1893, with the Hubay-Popper Quartet. We know of only one concert of this tour, which was reported in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* as a "very successful" concert in Paris.[12]

Near the end of 1893 there began for Popper a crucial period—the most trying in all his Budapest years. Under the prodding of Rákossy, Kern, and a few other journalists, the rumblings of the nationalistic press still complained about foreign influence in their musical culture and, of course, of German contamination of the Hungarian language and music.

On April 4th, on one of the trio concerts with Hubay, Popper had played his own "Hungarian Rhapsody." Not genuine Hungarian, by any means, but in the style of Liszt. It was a very effective virtuoso piece based on Hungarian folk songs. But this contribution was not enough to prove his loyalty, suppress the scandalmongers, or stem the onslaught of the ugliest press attack in his entire career. Distorted truths make good reading material for the sensation-seeking public, especially when the object of the attack is a celebrity.

The matter with which the accusation was concerned was not new. The same denunciations had been directed against Sophie Menter since 1876; the Viennese newspapers had even published a picture of her daughter Celeste, apparently in a deplorable condition. According to the reports she had been allowed to be "mishandled and mistreated" by her foster parents, with whom she lived in a northern Bohemian village. Later the papers stated that the whole story had been proved to be a malicious error.

After the divorce Popper had been given custody of his daughter, pointedly indicating that the court judged the mother disinterested in the child, and incompetent to care for her. When David and Olga were married, Mrs. Karoline Löbl, Olga's mother took over the supervision of Celeste's welfare—thus relieving the young bride from having to assume the care and jurisdiction over this other young person, then aged ten.

When Celeste was about seventeen years old the press in Budapest, seeking for some way to damage and disqualify Popper, the "foreign" professor, dug up the story of the "neglected child" and turned on him

Oskar Nedbal was among Prague's distinguished artists who joined the Hubay-Popper Quartet in a tribute to Brahms in Prague, 1894.

viciously. The accusation against him was so open that it reached the papers in Vienna and the international press. In Budapest the story was whipped up in some papers to such a degree that a segment of the social circles in which Popper had always been a welcome guest demanded his immediate dismissal as Professor of the Academy, a boycott of all his concerts, and demanded further that he should leave the country!

Thereupon the faculty of the Academy, under Director Mihalovich, gathered for a meeting, during which a public statement was given by them to the press, to wit: they unanimously declared publicly their unchallenged respect and honor for the deeply injured artist and colleague, and demanded that the accusations be completely retracted. The papers complied, branding the reports as spiteful.

At this point in affairs, Mrs. Löbl took Celeste into her home in Prague, and educated her there. Celeste often visited her father and stepmother when they vacationed in the summer in Karlsbad, or in St. Gilgen in the Alps. When she was married—to a gentleman we understand was either an engineer or a merchant—Mrs. Löbl supervised her wedding. Celeste had a son and a daughter.

On the surface, the situation in Budapest calmed down, but it took some time for society to adjust, and to treat Popper with the same sincere admiration and friendliness as before. In certain instances Popper suffered slights in spite of his rehabilitation by the Academy.

Concert activities of the Hubay-Popper quartet, and the trio concerts, proceeded as scheduled, with the participation of the leading pianists of the period. There was no obvious evidence of a boycott, nor further press

attack. But society was aloof for a considerable time, and formal invitations were less frequent than they had previously been.

Under these rather strained circumstances, Popper made a trip to Prague, where he was enthusiastically welcomed by the press as their native son, and was given warm and loving greeting by his relatives and in-laws. It was a tonic of family affection.

At a memorable concert the goodwill of his colleagues—all residents of Prague—participated in his solo recital, on which he offered his most effective pieces, known and played all over the world: "Nocturne," "Chanson Villageoise," "Spanish Dances," "Menuett," etc. These were followed by his *Requiem for Three Cellos and Piano,* with Hans Wihan, at that time professor at the Prague Conservatory, his excellent pupil Otto Berger, and Popper. The concluding number gathered, as it were, a congenial reunion of old friends in a tribute to Brahms, with Prague's distinguished artists Lachner, Czadek, Nedbal, Bauer, Wihan and Popper, performing Brahms' *Sextet* (Op. 18).

The concert was held in a splendid hall—the almost new Rudolphinum (opened in 1885)—which was overwhelmingly crowded with ardent music lovers. Reporting the concert in glowing terms, the critic finished with a description of the stirring presence of Anton Rubinstein, who went back to the artists' room afer the concert to greet his old friend Popper:

". . . It was a memorable moment to see the two celebrities together, and the characteristic handsome heads as they looked at each other in affectionate admiration . . ."[13]

In the same year (1894) the pianist Alfred Reisenauer gave a joint recital with Popper in Prague, and on Popper's initiative they followed it with another at the Music Institute Concert Hall, for the benefit of the teachers of the State Music Schools. Reinsenauer, one of the sought-after concert pianists from the class of Liszt, had become an outstanding figure on the world stage, concertizing in Europe, Siberia, and central Asia. He was twenty years Popper's junior. In a few more years he would take over the Master classes at the Leipzig Conservatory.

Popper's greatest popularity in Prague assured an eager welcome for the Hubay-Popper quartet, who performed there regularly through the years. As Popper's niece Caroline Brandeis developed into a fine pianist, Popper took her under his wing, presenting her in joint performances of Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Chopin Sonatas on the quartet concert programs, and later in occasional joint recitals on which he would give her equal time for her own solo numbers. He also introduced her in Budapest, and together they performed there his *Cello Suite* (Op. 69) for the first time, on November 21, 1897.

No artist is immune or safe from antagonistic criticism. Popper had his share, here and there. But a report from the Hanover correspondent seems contrived, as though attempting to praise on the one hand, and tear down on the other.

An unpleasant prejudice had lingered in Hanover, ever since Bülow had exerted his influence as conductor of the opera a few years earlier (leaving there in 1880) and from even earlier, when in 1865 the violinist Jacob Grün had been refused a promised advancement by the King, because of his Semitic features. It is impossible to know if the press felt restraints on its enthusiasms because of court policy, or was reacting to some echo from the Budapest tales of Popper's alleged neglect of his daughter and withholding praise, or whether Popper was actually indisposed at the concert, and not playing his best. The critic wrote:

". . . Professor Popper . . . played with consummate elegance—however, completely blasé and expressionless—a shallow work of his own composition for which the author gave the important title *Concerto.* In contrast, Schumann's "Traumerei" sounded very beautiful. A "Spanish Dance" of his own creation, in which he demonstrated all the art of his astounding technique, left one indifferent.

"The audience—when were there any other kind?—who had no comprehension of the arts, at least applauded these musical-clown art pieces for an unusually long time."[14]

[1]*NZfM* (Leipzig), January, 1891.

[2]Gustav F. Kogel, Conductor of Museum Concerts at Frankfurt, 1891-1903.

[3]Hans von Bülow, *Letters of Hans von Bülow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), p. 423.

[4]*NZfM* (Leipzig), March, 1894.

[5]Karl Flesch, *Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1958), pp. 191-2.

[6]*Scotsman* (Edinburgh), November 3, 1891.

[7]George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London* 1890-94 (London, Constable & Co., 1932).

[8]*The Musical Times and Singing-Class Circular* (London), Dec. 1, 1891.

[9]George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London 1890-94* (London, Constable & Co., 1932).

[10]Popper played his *E minor Concerto* and his compositions "Minuet," "Gavotte," "Papillon," "Tarantella," and "Vito" (from "Spanish Dances"). He also played "Nocturne" by Chopin, "Melody" by Rubinstein, and "Traumerei" by Schumann. Thomán's group of solos included "Pastorale" by Scarlatti, "Vivace" by Stavenhagen, and "Russian Nightingale" by Liszt.

[11]*Prager Tagblatt,* 1892.

[12]At that time, the Bohemian Quartet was recognized as the most excellent group in the field, and for a long while was not surpassed by any other organization, including the Hubay-Popper Quartet.

[13]*Prager Tagblatt,* 1894.

[14]*NZfM* (Leipzig), March 30, 1894.

Chapter XIV

Afterglow

David Popper and his son, Leo (1910).

Between 1895 and 1905 Popper was much in demand—perhaps more so than he would have chosen. But with a younger generation of cellists emerging into the limelight, he dared not stay away from the public too long a time; there would always be someone else eager to steal some of his hard-earned popularity, and too much relaxation could damage his status as "the foremost cellist of the day."

Concerts were scheduled, during the free time considerately allowed him by the Academy, in Basel, Leipzig, Prague, Vienna, Berlin, and many smaller cities on the continent, and in England and Scotland.

After being away, it was always an inspiring experience for him to come home to his young wife and son. The child was not very robust, which caused great concern to the parents. But as he grew older he was able to attend public school. He thus became the "Hungarian" representative of the family—a gratification for the patriots.

Leo showed talent for painting, and, according to Hubay, would sit quietly in a corner during rehearsals, making sketches of the musicians participating, and of the friends invited to sit in the next room to listen.

"The young Leo Popper, extraordinarily blessed with manysided talents, drew the likenesses of many celebrities of the day. After rehearsal the happy father would proudly show the sketches to his guests . . ."

There were two disturbing factors in the otherwise warm and happy family life: Leo's delicate health, and the need to interrupt the serenity and go on tours. There was a great demand for his performances, but the competition was becoming more formidable.

The younger generation of virtuosos, led by the ambitious and tireless Hugo Becker and by Hans Wihan, were touring with Dvorák's *Concerto.* This recent work, dedicated to Wihan, was given its first performance in London in 1890—played by Leo Stern, and conducted by Dvorák himself. It had not stirred up critical praise at that time. Alluding to the symphonic treatment of the *Concerto,* and the heavy orchestration, it had been described as ". . . a cello concerto without cello . . . ," and ". . . This most noble of instruments put in shackles on its feast-day! . . ."

Another concerto, dedicated to Becker, by d'Albert, joined the Dohnányi concerto a few years later, in an invasion of the European concert stage. The trend was set by the efforts of Becker, and of those who were lured by new music.

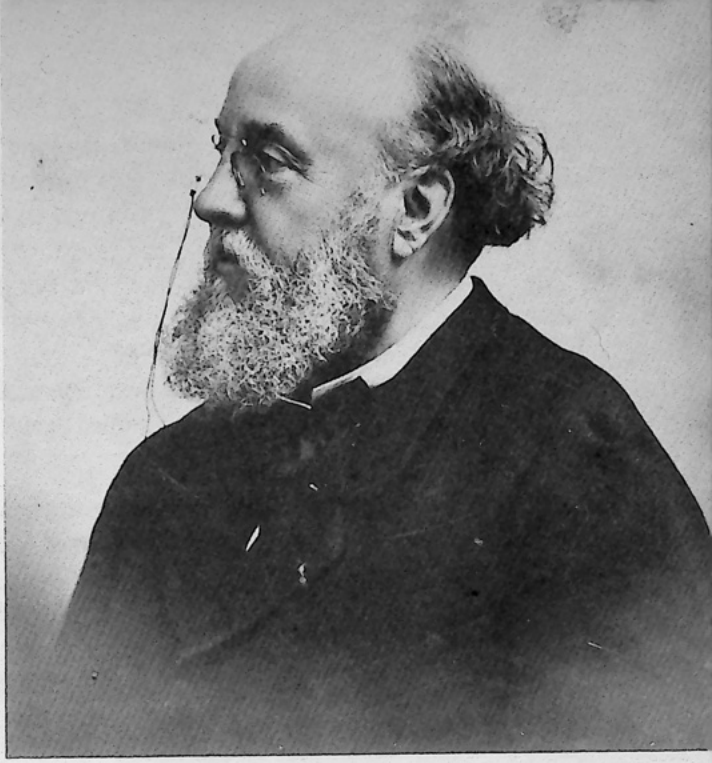
At the same time, "the inevitable" Popper pieces continued on all recital programs. The *Concerto in E minor,* and the *Im Walde* Suite, were performed by himself and also by Buxbaum, Hekking, Bürger, Schlemüller, Schröder, Brandukoff, and other prominent soloists.

Popper's popularity was undimmed. One of his early compositions—"Polonaise de Concert" (Op. 14)—had been on programs for many years. In 1897 the Belgian cellist Horace Britt toured in Holland and Belgium, and gave debut concerts in London and in Paris. The latter concert, with the Lamoureux Orchestra under the direction of M. Lamoureux, was reported in Le Guide Musical for March 28, 1897. The performance included the Saint-Säens Concerto, and Popper's "Polonaise de Concert"—with orchestra.

The phrase "with orchestra" was puzzling, as no orchestration by Popper was known. But a letter in French from Popper, dated February 12, 1897, in response to Britt's inquiry, clears up the mystery, and reads as follows: ". . . To my great regret I have to tell you that I have never thought of making an orchestration of the Polonaise de Concert in D minor . . . Please use the orchestration by your father. I beg you to give a thousand greetings from Mrs. Popper and myself to my dear friend Delsart, and I assure you of my special sentiments. As ever, D. Popper."

When Popper returned from tours in Switzerland, Russia, England and Scotland in 1897, a pleasant surprise awaited him. Emperor Franz Joseph awarded him the "Knight Cross." It seemed that this recognition by the court would put an end to the possibility of annoyance from those members of the press who were still fighting the revolution of 1848. Thus were healed the hurts he had received with the painful Celeste

Anton Hekking (above) performed "the inevitable" Popper pieces on recital programs. Alwin Schröder (below) was among the prominent cellists performing Popper's Concerto in E minor *and the* Im Walde *Suite.*



Charles Lamoureux directed the Lamoureux Orchestra in the March, 1897 Paris concert including a performance of Popper's Polanaise de Concert.

publicity of 1893, and the recurring anti-German propaganda of the previous years.

A sad event of the year was the death of Brahms—the loss of a great and cherished friend. When each colleague with whom one has associated through the years leaves the scene, the parting creates a sense of loneliness. Popper felt a growing awareness of old age.

When Popper had reached his forty-third year, his full head of hair was almost totally gray. This, surrounding the handsome face and flashing eyes, gave him such a distinguished appearance that hardly any critic could avoid mentioning his picturesque image on the stage.

But later, as he turned fifty, the grayness, to him, became associated with old age; perhaps induced by physical weariness, he also permitted the matter of age to surface in conversations, letters, and dedications on photos to friends and to pupils. Often when talking, he transformed the subject into a pun, or treated it with wit.

Once, during the intermission of his concert, the curiosity of a lady produced the question: "Tell me, Master, how can it be that your hair is gray, but your moustache is still black?" Popper replied, "You see, Madame, my moustache is twenty years younger than my hair!"

On another occasion, a very attractive lady in her forties received a compliment from Popper, referring to her beauty. The lady, quite aware of her youthful complexion and general good looks, in spite of her gray

hair, demurred, "But Master, I am already gray." Popper, sixty-nine by that time, directed his next remark so as to share the grayness with her, but to his own disadvantage, with a German pun: "But look at me! I am not only gray (grau) but also frightful (graulich)."

He often signed his letter as "Your old Popper," or photographs of himself, dedicated to pupils, were likely to bear the phrase, ". . . from your old schoolmaster, David Popper."

Still, he continued to cast his musical spell. In February of 1899 he played in Berlin, at the Singakademie Saal, arousing much hearty response:

"The famous master, David Popper, recently awarded the anticipation of his community of hearers. He had stayed away from the Berlin audience, and they were glad to hear him again . . . (His playing) was masterly, incomparably performed, with individuality and artistic feeling, and he spoke with noble musical concepts. Popper has a heavenly, soulful, clear and beautiful tone. We cannot name anybody among the outstanding cellists of today who approaches him. Moreover, he is unsurpassed in all technical aspects . . ."[1]

Another writer also reacted very favorably:

"To listen to an evening of cello solos is not the most exhilarating experience in the world, but listening to Popper is something else! One never gets tired of hearing his beautiful tone, and his masterful technique conceals the fact that he can make the most difficult passages appear easy and natural . . ."[2]

In March of 1903 Popper played in Köln am Rhein. By pure coincidence I received a letter in March, 1970, written to me by Professor Horace Fellowes, of Edinburgh. This remarkable gentleman had been a pupil at the Köln Conservatorium, under Willy Hess, from 1900 to 1903, and was present and participating at the Popper concert. He went to London as a member of the Hess Quartet. In 1908 he became Concertmaster of Thomas Beecham's Orchestra, and in 1914 Concertmaster of the Scottish Orchestra. He had rounded out his active years as Professor of violin at the Royal Scottish Academy for forty years, starting in 1924!

The letter is in exquisite handwriting, written at the age of ninety-five. I treasure it very much because of its first-hand report of Popper's playing and appearance:

". . . The occasion where I met and heard David Popper was at the Saturday Evening Concerts held in the winter months in the Concert Hall of the Conservatorium. This particular night was in March, 1903. He played two movements from his Concerto, with an orchestra of about

Popper, convalescing at Golling, in a touching pose with Leo, 1904.

forty players, including some advanced students. What impressed me most was the glorious tone he produced from his Strad—I think it was. One remark he made during the rehearsal was: 'Please, gentlemen, play a little softer. I am now an old man and cannot play so loud.'

"For thirty minutes after the interval, he played several pieces with piano accompaniment, including his famous 'Gavotte' and his arrangement of 'Du bist die Ruh,' Schubert, with such sensitive feeling that I remember it till this day. His attractive appearance and flowing white hair made a great impression on me . . ."

Paul Grümmer, Professor at the Vienna Conservatory, tells in his memoirs that when Popper walked on the stage of the Vienna Philharmonic for a dress rehearsal of Haydn's *D major Concerto,* the orchestra players greeted him with a warm reception, some striking the bow on the back of the violin.

As cello music is in a moderately low range, cellists are defensive concerning accompaniment—particularly orchestral accompaniment—which can muffle or overpower the solo. Popper therefore acknowledged the hearty welcome of his colleagues as he raised his right hand, holding the bow, and with eyes twinkling said, "Gentlemen, it is already too loud!"

On the exact date of the first anniversary of Brahms' death—April 3, 1898—the Hubay-Popper Quartet performed a memorial concert. The

program of Brahms' works included: *Quintet* (Op. 115), "Variations on a Hungarian Theme" for piano, a group of songs, and *Piano Quartet* (Op. 25). The pianist was Mrs. Mihály Adler, a very distinguished artist, and a friend of the Hubay-Popper Quartet.

Four new songs by Popper not yet published appeared on the quartet program on October 31, 1898. They were performed by Dora Lichtenstein, and were featured between Volkmann's *String-Quartet* (Op. 34), and Beethoven's (Op. 59 No. 3). Popper continued to display a great interest in song-writing; his instrumental small pieces sometimes hinted at the lyric mood and style of songs, which had been an early fondness.

As the turn of the century approached, Popper was working on the monumental *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels,* the *Scotch Fantasia,* and the *String-Quartet* (Op. 74), (which he dedicated to the Bohemian Quartet); he was also writing the *B minor Concerto* (No. 4), and arranging some sketches by Haydn into a *C major Concerto.* It was a period of almost feverish creative activity.

In the fall of 1898 Popper and his wife took a trip to southern France. While there they had a meeting with a certain Monsieur Eugene Dumont Saint-Priest, of Villeneuve-Sur-Lot, to discuss the possibility of a tour in France, and some related publicity. They learned that a young lady cellist had just recently received first prize at the Paris Conservatory, performing Popper's *E minor Concerto.* This fact is relayed by Mrs. Popper in a postcard sent to her sister Emilia.

M. Saint-Priest set up a pamphlet in the form of a short biography, an interview, and a list of Popper's compositions and transcriptions, arranged chronologically. It was published in 1899 by Renaud Leygues, in Villeneuve-Sur-Lot, the home of the interviewer.

It seems that the purpose for the pamphlet of sixteen pages was to promote Popper's compositions, rather than to persuade him to give concerts in France.

Popper was a practical person; he had no reason to curtail his tours in middle Europe or in England for unprofitable engagements in Paris, and perhaps in two or three French provincial towns.

Discussing the financial condition of musical activities in Paris during the years of his residence there (1890-1896), the violinist Karl Flesch made the following observations:

The important violinists whom I had the opportunity to hear during those years can easily be enumerated, for with the exception of the Sunday concerts, there was not really an international concert life in Paris before the First World War. The native artists were content to give one concert every year. There were hardly any public places for the sale of tickets. The artist in question sent to each of his friends or patrons, at

David Popper and his wife, Olga, in Southern France, 1898.

whose house he had made music in the course of the year without remuneration a number of tickets, which they duly paid for. As a result, Paris concerts tended to be a social and financial affair, and really artistic events were the exception. Nowhere else in the world was the nuisance of unpaid playing so widespread as in Paris. Gabriel Pierné, who was born in 1863, assured me that in his youth it still went without saying that an artist made no claim to be paid for his performance."[3]

It has been impossible to discover any clue as to the identity of M. Saint-Priest except that he was the husband of a singer, namely Cecile Dumont Saint-Priest, who was herself a writer of poems. One of her religious poems—"Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes"—had come into the hands of Popper, and he had composed music for it in the form of soprano solo with cello obligato and with piano or organ accompaniment.

The work was published by F. Durdilly, Ch. Hayet (Successor) in Paris in 1898, on very elaborate paper. The outer and inner pages bear two different portraits of Madame Saint-Priest in appropriate costume for the presentation of just such a religious song.

The interview touched on various subjects—among them the range of the cello, and its best register. Popper defended himself against the occasional accusation that he employed the violin register in his cello pieces to a greater extent than did other composers. This he justified as being done only rarely, for specific musical effects, and to stir the imagination. M. Saint-Priest gave a short analytical description of the smaller pieces, and he led the conversation in the interview to the *Im Walde* Suite, into which, he claimed, "he poured profusely the best of his inspiration and talent." At this point Popper highly praised German orchestras, conductors, and audiences; his words are quoted by M. Saint-Priest:

"I have just returned from a trip to Germany where I was given the warmest reception.

"You have no idea what magnificent orchestras and first rank orchestra conductors I have encountered there almost everywhere.

"There is no greater pleasure for a musician-composer than to hear his works performed as they are in that country.

"At Mainz, I had Steinbach as conductor, at Karlsruhe, Felix Mottl, at Dresden, Ernest Schuch, at Stuttgart, Dr. Obrist, etc.

"With this in mind you can judge yourself how well *Im Walde* must have been executed!"

The *Im Walde* Suite was a sweeping success, and it often happened that the audience insisted on repetitions from it of the "Dance of the Gnomes" and the "Reigen." Other cellists performed the Suite soon after its publication in 1882—notably Brandukoff in both Paris and

Russia. Popper held this young colleague in high esteem. A copy of his "Nocturne," which Popper autographed for him, is now displayed in the Tchaikovsky Museum in Köln, with the words, "Souvenir aimable offert a Monsieur A. Brandukoff. Bern, January 10, 1880."

M. Saint-Priest went on to say:

"(In) February, 1885, in Bordeaux . . . we had the pleasure of admiring his singular virtuosity.

"As far as we know—and we think we are not mistaken—this was the only time that David Popper performed in France.

"And yet, he goes on numerous artistic tours in England and Scotland where, he said, 'the people love music, that is incontestable,' and in Germany, where the artist and his compositions are always received with enthusiasm."[4]

In the closing paragraphs of the interview, he continued:

"We have said enough to point out how famous David Popper is, and we only regret that we do not have the opportunity to applaud his talent in France.

"It is very fortunate that David Popper is still young. His reputation as virtuoso has nothing more to gain beyond the Alps.

"And, who knows? . . . perhaps the laurels bestowed upon him in Germany and England will not seem sufficient to him in the long run, and we surely hope that, tempted by our acclaim, David Popper will finally decide to come and ask France for the final consecration of his talent. Thus, we hope in the near future, to see his name shine with fascinating brilliance on the programs of our concerts."

In these highly persuasive words, perhaps with Popper's consent, a fresh promotion of Popper's compositions was instigated but, as far as we know, without any active participation by Popper. He did not play in France after that interview. As he grew older, he thought of himself primarily as a composer. The bulk of his programs was from his own works, and he neglected to learn new modern compositions, obviously wishing to keep his own pieces exposed to the public. He realized that the names of legendary virtuosos of earlier times had been perpetuated more by their compositions, and less by the writings of their contemporaries and critics.

In the early eighteen-nineties, during the intermission of one of Popper's Vienna recitals, Popper received an interesting windfall. A man who appeared at the artist's room handed Popper a few sheets of wrinkled manuscript papers, saying that they were some sketches for a cello concerto, by Haydn, that perhaps Popper would find the material interesting, and that he was welcome to have it. Popper was slightly skep-

tical, but thanked him, commented that he would see what he could do with it. The source of the papers and identity of the gentleman are complete mysteries.

A few years later, during a summer vacation, Popper took time to study the almost forgotten sketches, and judged that the themes were genuinely by Haydn. Thereupon, he set out to work them into a concert form of three movements, for which an outline had already been provided. Popper wrote the piano accompaniment and orchestration. The result was the Haydn *C major Cello Concerto,* published in 1899 by Ries and Erler, in Berlin. According to inquiries, no one knows the whereabouts of the original sketches today.

For two years Popper had not toured in middle Germany, when in December, 1899, he played there in several towns—among them Braunschweig and Halle. The critic correspondent enthusiastically reports these concerts:

"Popper's heavenly playing brought stormy acclaim from the audience. In addition to his own compositions he also performed beautifully Haydn sketches which he recently discovered and has arranged into a Haydn *C major Concerto;* from every point of view the three movements show the good old Haydn at his best.

"Popper has worked on this concerto with reverence, and did not dress it up with any superficial frills, but arranged it for concert performance in such a way that Papa Haydn could not wish for anything better."[5]

In Professor Zsámboki's notes can be found the following interesting reference to a *C major Concerto* by Haydn, quoted from an item which appeared on November 16, 1961, in the *Hungarian Nation*—a Hungarian newspaper:

"The manuscript of Haydn's *C major Concerto,* for cello and orchestra, was found in Prague. The work is from Haydn's younger period, and authorities knew of its existence, but the manuscript was not discovered until now. The work's introductory presentation will be next year."

It would be intriguing to compare this with Popper's arrangement. Zsámboki goes on to relate that Popper's version was at that time (1961) being published in the Soviet Union. This would indicate that the concerto is not neglected, and that it is possibly available to cellists. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to get further information about the above from Prague.

On Sunday morning, May 12, 1900, a young man of nineteen years rang the bell at the door of the Popper apartment. He was reporting as an accompanist, for a rehearsal for a forthcoming concert. When Popper met the young man—a student of piano and composition in his first year

Alois Obrisk (from the Müller collection), conductor at Stuttgart, was among the recipients of Popper's praise: "What magnificent orchestras and first rank orchestra conductors I have encountered there [Germany] almost everywhere."

at the Academy—little did he realize that some day in the future Béla Bartók would be recognized as one of the great composers of the twentieth century.

In his letters to his mother, Bartók tells of the circumstances that led him to meet Popper and accompany him on a concert.

A professor at the Academy and a former pupil of Popper, Adolf Schiffer (1873-1950), was responsible for the meeting. Schiffer had played some music with Bartók and was very much impressed with the young student's pianistic qualities and his musicianship. The event was not long in presenting itself—a charity concert at the Park Club—a most exclusive place, where Austrian and Hungarian aristocrats gathered, especially in the racing season.

The concert was for the benefit of a proposed Sanatorium, to be built in the suburbs of Budapest for poor tuberculosis patients. The audience was made up of the cream of the aristocrats of the dual monarchy, including four princes, twenty counts, diplomats from the cabinet, ambassadors, and high ranking officers of the army—the typical cross section of the ruling class of those years. They were not exactly representative of the music loving strata of the population, but their presence hopefully assured financial support for the cause, and also lent glamour and color to the concert.

On the program were two singers from the opera, one solo pianist, and Popper, whom Bartók accompanied.[6]

On May 18, 1900, Bartók wrote to his mother:

". . . I am writing right after the concert (it is now eleven p.m.) . . . am very glad that I had a chance to play with a real artist at last, and became acquainted with a delightful man . . . At the end of the first rehearsal he told me that I am a good sight reader, and thanked me five times for coming to his house . . ."

Popper played two groups: first his "Polonaise de Concert," "Melody" by Rubinstein, and his own famous "Gavotte"; the second group included "Adagio" from Schumann's Concerto, and Popper's "Spanish Dance" (probably the "Vito").

Bartók continues, in his letter to his mother:

". . . Tonight I went to Popper's house, and . . . we went together to the Park Club. On his full dress lapel he wore miniature copies of his decorations—Hungarian, Turkish, Swedish, Spanish, Danish, Prussian and Portugese! . . . After the concert, many people congratulated Popper. Popper was chatting with various counts when suddenly someone approached him and said: 'Do you remember me? I am Prince Metternich.'

Above: Felix Mottl conducted at Karlsruhe, Germany during a tour after which Popper lauded German orchestras, conductors and audiences. Below: Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937), French composer, conductor and organist. Noting the financial condition of musical activities in Paris, Karl Flesch observed in his Memoirs*: "Gabriel Pierné . . . assured me that in his youth it still went without saying that an artist made no claim to be paid for his performance."*

Pianist and composer Béla Bartók and his wife. In May, 1900, Bartók, then nineteen years old, accompanied Popper during a Park Club charity concert in Budapest.

. . . There were many Austrian Counts, also . . . Golchowsky, the foreign minister, also congratulated Popper . . . He was very pleased with my accompaniment, and thanked me again . . . On the way, riding home, he told me that I will hear from him . . ."

Nine days later, Bartók wrote his mother again. He mentions that he had met Popper, who asked him if he had heard from "those people" (referring to financial compensation)!! ". . . I told him that I have not heard. Popper said that they were complaining that the income was small (from the concert), so they don't pay . . ." Charity concerts seldom, if ever, paid the artists, but it was expected that the accompanist would receive some fee for his work. Not in this case! The audience, which consisted of the richest segment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, could not afford to pay fifteen or twenty forint, as he had been led to anticipate, to Bartók, the poor student of the Academy.

This is a small example of the disregard of the aristocracy for the needs of less fortunate members of society. Napoleon had described Austria, many years earlier, as ruled by eighty families. The rigid caste system would not disappear into history until 1918.

Before the year 1900 ended, Popper's concern about his son's health weighed on his heart more heavily than ever before. Since the first sign of Leo's illness had manifested itself, in 1897, the family had spent the summers in high altitude resorts in the Alps. But his had not solved the problem, and they were advised to send the boy to a sanatorium in Davos, Switzerland.

The two letters below, written by the parents, give the reader an intimate look into the anguish suffered by the Poppers at the time when Leo was sent to Switzerland, at the age of fourteen.

The letters are from March of 1901 to Popper's nephew, George Feigl, who lived in New York, and whose mother Jetti and sister Johanna were visiting in Budapest at that time. Coincidentally, Johanna (Joe) got married there to Mr. Rév, and stayed in Budapest. At the outbreak of World War I Colonel Feigl sent for her and brought her back to New York. Unfortunately, Popper's sister Jetti had died during her visit to Budapest.

The letters speak for themselves. Both are in English, and are quoted just as they were written, with small errors in grammar and some wrong spellings, to draw the reader a little closer to the writers. Mrs. Popper wrote first:

"March 23, 1901—Dearest George, We beg your pardon that we did not yet congratulate you to your wedding, but you will understand our feelings and pardon us. Now we do it from full heart and wish you to be so happy as your dear sister Joe is now in her young married life, and with Lord's blessing will always be, a better wish we have not for you, it is the best we have. She is so sweet to call every day on us and really her appearance is the best consolation for uncle in our dear Leo's absence. Your dear Ma is also very happy and they all and also we would like very much to see you and your dear wife in Europe and to us. From dearest Leo we have good novels he writes every day and is very satisfied, and He is in the best sanatorium of Dr. Turbaus in Davonsplatz Switzerland and my dear mother is with him, so that we can be quiet about this point.

"Please do not laugh about my bad english writing, I am in a great hurry and if I were not I also could not write better. Wishing you the best health and happiness to your dear wife I am yours Sincere aunt Olga"

Popper's letter which followed the one above, evokes the person and spirit of the missing Leo with much fervor:

"My dear George It is of course quite an enterprise to risque an english letter after the excellent english writing of my wife! Courageous as I am I undertake it, so more as I have so much to tell you. Firstly: my heartiest wishes for your and your dear wife's best luck! We where very pleased with your charming letter and would feel completely happy, if our dear

Emil Hermann was responsible, with Wurlitzer, for bringing Popper's J.B. Guadagnini (1772) to the United States.

boy would be fully restored to health; you can inpossibilly imagine, how we miss him every minute and at every place of our home, which was allways filled out of his sunshine, his sweet voice and his incomparable humour!

"Let us hope, that I will be so happy to give you in my next letter best tidings concerning Leo. Now I finish. Your dear mother looks splendidly and grows younger and younger. Give please my love to your dear wife. God bless you both together. Yours with much love uncle David.

"The young couple (Joe and comp[any]) is the most charming one can see: they make sensation where ever they appear!"

In spite of the somber mood and the apprehension Popper kept up his engagements. One concert took place in Freiburg, near the French border in southwestern Germany. The time was close to the time of the above letters, and one can sympathetically imagine an inner strain and agony possibly revealing itself in Popper's playing. Or the unfavorable criticism could reflect the personal antagonism of the critic!

". . . Popper played in Freiburg with the orchestra. He played sweetly, but somewhat heartily when there was opportunity for it in the composition. His program was boring—his instrumentation of the *E minor Concerto* cast no fire—and the two arrangements of Gluck and Tartini, and his own "Gavotte" definitely surprised us. The formal orchestral accompaniment of the latter left this well-known piece to be something to be desired; other cellists play this piece more gallantly."[7]

The unfavorable tone of this report seems to have left no bad feeling. And by another year, news came that Leo was better, and contemplating a return to Budapest. A post card dated August 16, 1902, written by Popper from Keszthely to his colleagues, the newly formed Kemény-Schiffer Quartet, was in a better mood. Among those to whom he sent greetings he included the "Guarnerius del Gesù" cello which Schiffer had recently acquired, and of which he commented, "I wouldn't mind to own it!"[8]

It was usually arranged that Schiffer would handle Popper's class of pupils when Popper had to be away. In March of 1903, he gave several concerts in Italy, and he wrote ecstatically to Schiffer of how difficult it had become to tear himself away from:

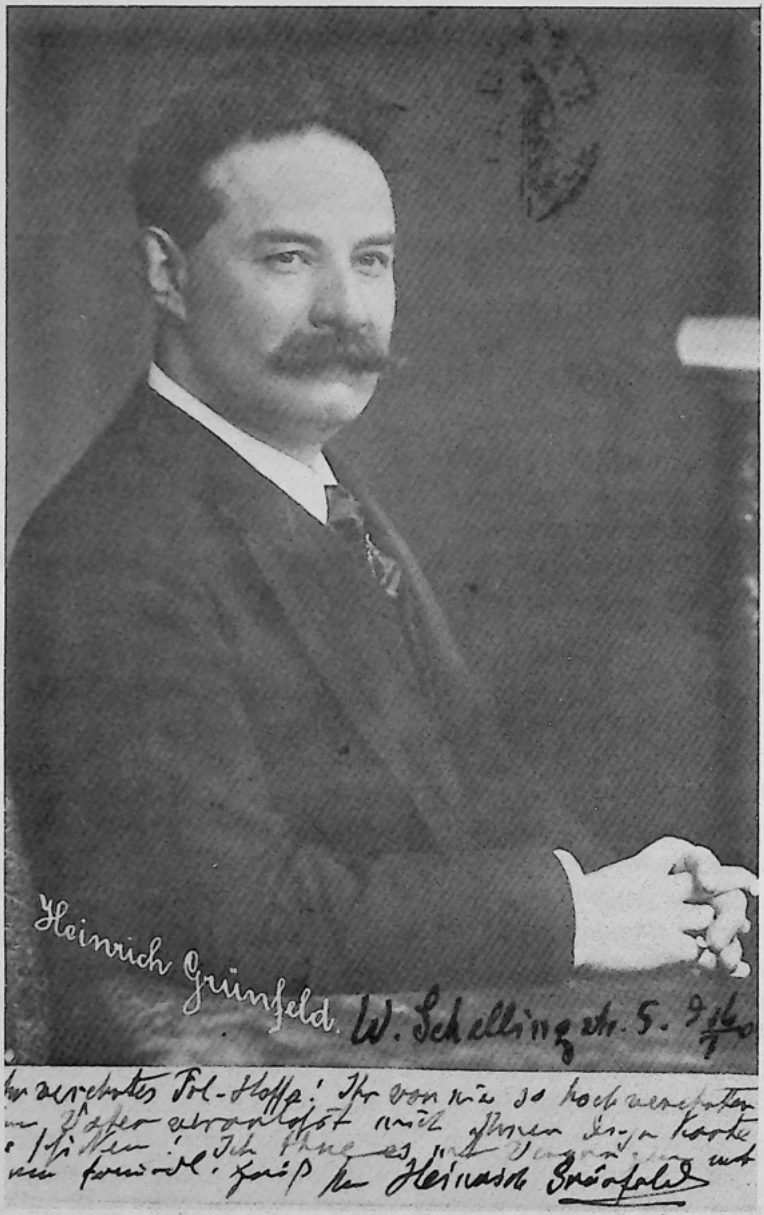
". . . the divine, glorious Rome. And yet the strong sense of duty is victorious over poor human weakness, which nowhere else comes to mind more overwhelmingly and crushingly than in Rome . . . Because I had been so seriously ill in Florence, I was only just able to drag myself back to Rome. I have taken care of all business matters, and look back to never-to-be forgotten days and impressions . . ."

Early in the next year he participated in the "Elite Concerts" series in Berlin, and he also gave his own solo recital there. He played mostly his own compositions, and on his own concert he was supported by Heinrich Grünfeld and Jacques van Lier in the *Requiem for Three Cellos.*

His *String-Quartet* (Op. 74) was published in the same season. It drew some mildly unfavorable criticism, which emphasized the belief that Popper's gift was more specifically for "cello miniature" music than for larger forms. A similar disregard by performers for his concertos and for the *Russian Phantasy* irked him very much. In an interview with Saint-Priest, in 1899, he had said, ". . . cellists, in general, rarely take the trouble to learn my concertos. They are content to play the 'Elfentanz,' 'Papillon,' 'Tarantella' and others of my shorter works.' " Undoubtedly, the critic's reaction to the quartet must have hit a sensitive nerve!

In the summer of 1904 the family including Leo and some close friends were together in Golling, near Salzburg. This time David, rather than Leo, was the center of concern. In August he underwent surgery for gallstones. His complaint while in Florence had probably been connected with his illness. Although the surgery was successful, the misery before and after the operation marked his face. One of several snap-shots from Golling, made during his convalescence, is a touching picture of father and son, with Leo, in a Tyrolean suit and sporting a tiny moustache, protectively standing very close to his father, who is leaning on his cane.

On September 2nd he wrote the following letter to Schiffer, who had the responsibility to take care of Popper's class during his illness:



Heinrich Grunfeld participated with Jaques van Lier in support of Popper on the Requiem for Three Cellos *in Berlin, 1904.*

"Golling bei Salzburg—September 2, 1904—Dear Schiffer—At last I am able to pull myself together to write a few lines. A terrible time hangs behind me like a bad dream. Through a successful operation, death was avoided just in time . . . It was a question of life or death . . . But physically and mentally I am in a very run-down condition from the long suffering, and it will take a long time—I think six more weeks—till I will be able to take up my official duties again. My dear and good Schiffer, through your compassion you are sacrificing yourself for such a long time . . . I anticipate an especially beautiful fall season in the mountains . . .and will later go south for a short time . . . Heartfelt greetings from your old and weak Popper."

[1]*Signale* (Berlin), February, 1899.

[2]Max Marschalk, *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin), 1899.

[3]Karl Flesch, *Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan Co. 1958), pp. 77-8.

[4]M. Dumont Saint-Priest, (Interview) *David Popper* (Villeneuve-Sur-Lot: Renaud Leygues, 1899).

[5]*NZfM* (Leipzig), January, 1900.

[6]Described by János Demény, *Béla Bartók's Student Years and his Romantic Period.* Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó. 1954.

[7]*NZfM* (Leipzig), March, 1901.

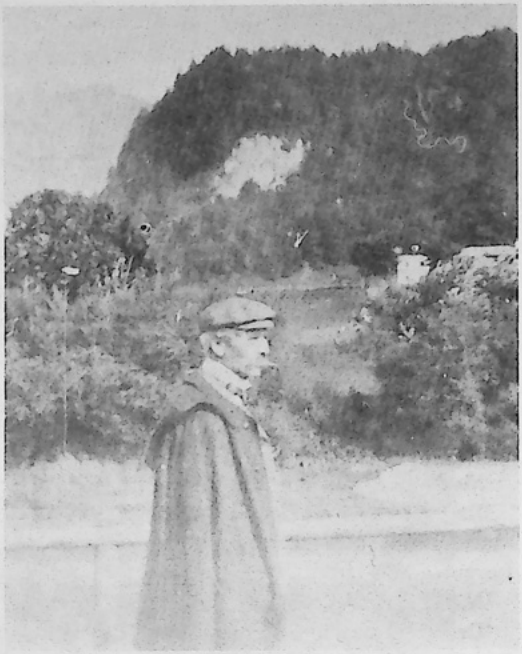
[8]Popper owned several cellos during his long career. The most important among them, for which he had a special affection, was by Niccoló Amati (1650). It was sold by Mrs. Popper through a dealer in Vienna to a cellist living in Germany. Popper also owned a G. B. Grancino (1685), which was sold to Alfred Wallenstein in 1920, likewise in Vienna.

For many years Popper frequently used his J. B. Guadagnini (1772). It was sold in England, brought to the United States through Wurlitzer and Emil Herrmann, and finally sold to Joseph Ditullio. The instrument was badly damaged in an automobile accident in Los Angeles, but has since been restored.

During his tenure at the Vienna Opera House, Popper used his cello by the Viennese master, Martin Stos (1842). Later in the book, the writer tells how this was given to him by Popper.

Chapter XV

The Crucial Years



David Popper in the Alps during his convalescence, 1904.

Delayed one year, because of Popper's illness, plans were made in 1905 for festivities to celebrate Popper's fortieth anniversary as a concert artist. He had begun his career before 1864, but had first accomplished the stature of a musical celebrity in that year, with the Volkmann *Concerto.* He had recovered sufficiently from the operation of the summer that by late winter the celebration was planned for March, and plans were made for an English tour to follow.

The wounds of discord and the alleged character assassination, which had damaged his social relationships in 1893 were healed, as was demonstrated by the outgoing enthusiasm of the celebrants. He had been a resident and faculty member for nineteen years, and had proven to skeptics his loyalty to his adopted country and his great interest in the musical life and activities of Hungary.

The local press anticipated the gala events with a wholehearted tribute to Popper:

"David Popper, the acknowledged king of the violoncello, is known to all music lovers as also a chamber musician, teacher, and composer. It seems to us unnecessary to repeat our loving admiration and deeply felt thanks which we have shown in the past. No other cellist could come near to the great clarity of his noble and warm tone, which is matched with his flawless virtuosity."[1]

An impressive list of sponsors, headed by Count Albert Apponyi as chairman, with Madame Jenö Hubay, K. Elek Lippich, Ödön Mihalovich and János Végh as presidents, was supported by seventy-three members of an Organizing Committee, which represented a cross section of the cultural leaders, artists, and political figures of the time.

Except for two Counts—Apponyi, and the young János Zichy—hereditary aristocrats were absent. Popper had been applauded at the Park Club just a few years before, but of course that had been for charity.

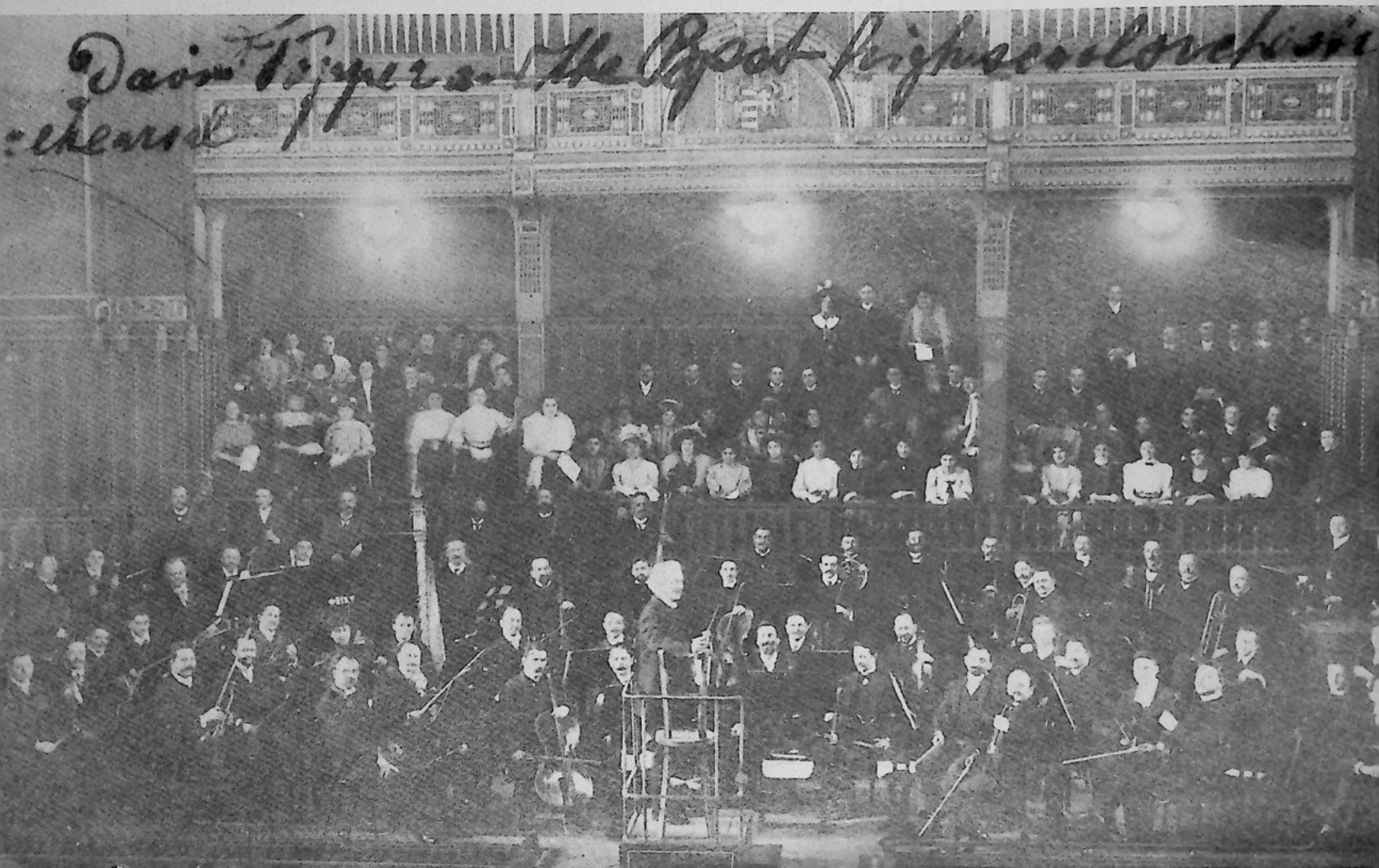
After the day's long but stirring series of events, with delegations, testimonials, gifts and tributes—even a scholarship awarded in his honor, and the sweet acclaim of a group of children—there followed a concert performance by Popper, and then, a grand banquet with persons of eminence in attendance. Popper was so overcome by the honors bestowed on him throughout the day, that he requested his son to say a few words of appreciation in his behalf. Young Leo asked the guests to forgive his father for delegating this duty to him, because of his fatigue and excitement.

Undoubtedly some degree of exhaustion would have been a valid reason. But Popper had experienced repeated homage and applause during his many years as a concert artist, and was accustomed to ovations and cheers. A different kind of defensive behavior can be observed here, related to the delicate problem of language. If Popper himself had made a statement—and he was always ready with an appropriate reply or witty comment—it would have had to be in German. He was attuned to human sensitivity, and aware of the patriotic feelings of his audience. The eulogies and tributes had been spoken in Hungarian. The response, delivered by his son in Hungarian, avoided the risk of stirring discontent anew among his critics, and was a diplomatic gesture of thanks to all.

With the end of the eventful day of March 29, 1905, came Popper's realization of the end of an epoch, and a long glance backward to his origins and the development of his special gifts.

As the years accumulated with ever increasing momentum, and as his strength diminished in inverse ratio, foreign tours were scheduled much less frequently. But the activities did not slacken in Budapest. In addition to the Hubay-Popper Chamber Music series, the newly organized Academy Orchestra assumed importance in the life of the musical community. All professors, and former and advanced students took part in it. Popper and Hubay conducted, alternately. Out of consideration for Popper's age, and as a courtesy, Hubay took the position of concertmaster when Popper conducted; but when his partner had the baton, Popper was not expected to sit as first cellist.

The programs were of high calibre, representing various periods. One of Popper's programs, for example, included the *Faust Overture* by



Wagner, *Suite in D major* by Bach *Enigma Variations* by Elgar, and the *Symphony in D minor* by Volkmann. At another performance he conducted a Haydn *Symphony, Schicksalslied* for chorus and orchestra by Brahms, *Serenade* by Richard Strauss, and *Mephisto Waltz* by Liszt.

Equally varied were Hubay's programs, one of which was comprised of a Bach number, *Suite,* by Bartók, and a Brahms *Symphony.*

The Chamber Music series, over a few consecutive seasons, enlisted the participation of many very outstanding pianists; among them were: Backhaus, Bloomfield-Zeisler, Dienzl, Dohnányi, Friedmann, Godowsky, Lamond, Stavenhagen, and Thomán.

The stress and strain of a combination of circumstances began to show in Popper's face. These were to a great extent the musical activities—playing, conducting, and teaching—but the chief concern was in connection with Leo's illness. He usually could find relief in humor, which worked well for him as an antidote to cover up grim realities. But there were exceptions, in certain grave moments, when he was unaware that his countenance betrayed that he was in deep thought.

On the occasion when the husband of Emilie, his wife's sister (and a great favorite of them both) bought a summer villa, his humor lighted up. The year was 1907, and the place was the little resort village of St. Gilgen between Ischl and Salzburg, on the Wolfgangsee, gloriously tucked in between the gentlest slopes of mountains. Mozart's mother was born here, which fact is commemorated with an exquisite fountain of the boy Mozart playing the violin, with wrought iron birds and flowers at his feet and covering the wall. In a letter to Emilie he wrote:

". . . Congratulations on your new acquisition. Now that I am beginning to worry about my future, because of my advanced age (sixty-four) I must concern myself for my future security. I can hardly wait to apply for a job as janitor of your villa. I am very familiar with gardening (I bent many lilies in my time) and I am not averse to less poetic and harder work . . . Mozart's mother and sister were your predecessors in St. Gilgen. Be worthy of them, and present us with another little Mozart. We need him . . ."

He mentions in the letter that he has more composing to do, but does not indicate that he had produced any new works. After 1905, when the fourth and final volume of the *Hohe Schule* was published, his incentive for composing was considerably diminished.

Opposite page: Popper conducting the Hungarian Royal Music Academy Orchestra, Budapest.

Pianist Wilhelm Bachaus participated in the Hubay-Popper Chamber Music series at the Music Academy, Budapest.

In place of incentive were apprehension and the need to continue his official work. A photograph showing father and son (circa 1909), both seated, Popper with the cello, reveals the same expression on both perturbed faces. Popper's is crease-worn and puzzled. Leo seems on the verge of hopelessness and his face leans closely against his father's left arm. The anxious tension was to continue until 1911.

The name of Casals had appeared in 1906—first in Amsterdam and Paris and in Germany's important cities. Popper was interested, and followed the phenomenal success of Casals, as well as the appearances of others in the youngest generation of cellists.

He was gratified to know that the Popper pieces were still played on cello programs. In 1892, in his first concert, in Barcelona, Casals had played Popper's "Gavotte." In 1897 he played Popper's "Tarantella" and Chopin's "Nocturne." (As Casals later recorded the Popper arrangement of the Chopin, this was probably the same).

During 1910 Leo occupied himself with research in the history of art, did a great deal of painting, and wrote several essays on art, which appeared in print. Charles de Tolnay, director of the Casa Michelangelo in Florence, writing in a letter to me on November 7, 1969, said:

". . . I never knew Leo Popper personally, I only read a few of his articles, among them two very excellent ones. For this reason I quoted his 'Bruegel' article on my lecture in Budapest . . . He was an extraordinary talent, and considering his age, a mature aesthete . . ."

By February of 1911, Popper was again writing to Schiffer about Leo—this time from Gries, near Bozen, in the Alps, where they had taken him hoping for some improvement in his condition:

". . . It will take a longer absence than originally expected. I myself urgently need a longer recovery because of my depressions and nervousness. Unfortunately, Leo is not doing well, and this is the main reason for my condition, which was inevitable in spite of all my struggle against it with my total will power. Against destiny one is helpless to fight. Strong-natured men can bear it, but weaker are defeated!

"(Write to me occasionally. What did Casals play from me, and is he as phenomenal as all that is told about him?) Leo is gay, full of humor, and witty, and truly has a wonderful disposition. Your old D. Popper"

Three days before writing the above letter, on February 9, he sent a five-strophe poem to Emilie congratulating her on her thirtieth birthday. It is written in a somewhat jovial mood. The persistent "gray hair" theme again reappears: "One with gray hair congratulates you on your birthday!" He also recalls the pleasant hours spent at her house, and the wonderful dinners she served for "the old one." And the ever-gallant brother-in-law likens her beauty to that of a lily, which would seem pale in comparison.

He is rhapsodic about the beauty of Gries: ". . . It is beautiful here. The weather is marvelous, and the heavens have poured all charm and beauty into this blessed placed!" . . . It sounds like the sensitive, nature-loving composer of *Im Walde* again.

Having heard of Popper's generally depressed state, Mihalovich, the director of the Academy, wrote him a letter which was full of reassurance and praise. Popper disliked letter writing, but now he had time to attend to correspondence, which in turn helped to take his mind off more immediate impending problems. His reply is quoted below:

"Dear and deeply respected Director: May I send you my heartfelt thanks for your gracious and friendly letter. In order to be worthy of your praise I will have to devote the rest of my life to deserve it. I still feel strong and energetic enough to make it clear to our highly ambitious youth that all developments began with the old masters, and that, after many trials and errors, they must always return to them. And since we are on the subject: we the professors are in a position to call to you, dear Director, as Eva did to Hans Sachs, 'What without your love (etc.)? . . .' Without your powerful support, what could we have done? Surrounded by a group of chauvinists who are full of animosity towards art, and are music-murderers, you alone stood firmly, as a whole man and as a great artist, powerful and steadfast in your convictions of truth. You created

an Art Institute which today—and this I say without reservation—cannot be matched in its artistic standards by any of the great European conservatories. What I say is not an exaggerated overbearing statement. It is pure unadulterated truth! It remains your imperishable credit, my dear Director, because it is unthinkable what would have happened to the Institute if a weak man, who would have satisfied the 'artistic needs' of the 'true patriots' (for example: Károly Eötvös), had been at the helm. This is on my mind all the time, and therefore, with love, I warmly embrace you. Your true and faithful Popper.

"P.S. Respectful regards from my wife and son."

On July 31, 1911, he sent a card from Görbersdorf, Silesia, to his former pupil Ludwig Lebell, who lived in London and was teaching at Trinity College, and to Schiffer, who was visiting Lebell at that time. He gently teased the latter as "world traveler." In reference to Leo there were ominous words: ". . . He is not doing so well . . . and we are in a depressed mood. God help us! Heartfelt greeting to you all from old Popper." From the date and location it is indicated that the grieving parents were staying close to Reinerz, where they had placed Leo in a sanatorium, and were there awaiting the final days of their son. ". . . In this dreadful state of mind which we have endured for more than fourteen years," confided Popper in a card to Schiffer of September 14, 1911, "I cannot write a reasonable letter. Please let me know how were the entrance exams? My head is worn out . . . forgive this hasty note . . ."

Leo's death occurred in November, 1911. The Poppers returned in the winter to Budapest. They bore the tragedy inwardly, within a private world of restraint. Outwardly Popper adhered to the custom of the day, and wore a black silk band on his coat sleeve, and used black bordered stationery. These were the symbolic manifestations which told friends and acquaintances of his personal grief.

The sense of futility which oppressed him in the periods before and after Leo's death was accompanied by an awareness of the decline of his own renown. He held certain doubts as to the permanence of fame, and realized the neglect that was due to come to every mortal artist who had experienced great success. Though it was difficult for him to acquiesce to this fading out of public interest, he made seemingly broadminded statements regarding the rights of young emerging artists.

He expressed no resentment or jealousy toward the ambitious of the new generation, but insisted that the fighting spirit of youth must prevail if any success was to follow.

It was noticeable that Popper closely observed the rapid rise of Casals. Casals' first concert in Budapest had been on February 8, 1911, and Popper had been unable to attend because he was in Gries with his son. As

Pablo Casals' name appeared in 1906—first in Amsterdam and Paris and in Germany's important cities. Popper followed Casals' successful career and Casals included Popper pieces on his programs: "I played almost everything Popper wrote!"

Joachim and his beautiful wife (facing page). Clara Schumann, Bülow and Joachim had initiated the first steps in the trend of uncompromising submission and sublimation of the artist to the will and ideas of the composer.

we noted in his letter to Schiffer, he had wished to know what Casals had played, by him. At the close of the last group Casals had played three pieces by Popper: "Warum," "Mazurka" (Op. 11) and "Arlequin." The choice of these popular pieces must have pleased the composer.

On subsequent recitals Casals performed Popper numbers on the program, including: "Tarantella," "Chanson Villageoise," "Spanish Serenade," and "Vito."

It was my privilege to witness the exit of an era which was fast vanishing and the beginning of a new musical approach: the uncompromising submission and sublimation of the artist to the will and ideas of the composer. This trend was of course not entirely unique. Clara Schumann, Bülow, and Joachim had taken the first steps in this direction.

In art, as well as in appearance, Casals was not the prototype of a nineteenth century romantic. He was short in stature, already balding in his thirty-fifth year, an austere, intensely concentrated ascetic visage when on the stage, eyes closed when he played: a solitary messenger of the great masters, through their most intimate language. The new audiences of the twentieth century instantly sensed the fresh musical experience, which was both a leap into the new century, and a reinterpretation of the old. Casals brought a unique sound even to Popper's music, with which, by the way, the master was not in complete agreement. Casals was very well acquainted with all of Popper's works, and many, many years later—in 1960—he said to me, ". . . I played almost everything Popper wrote!"

In the fall of 1912, Popper suggested that I meet him at his house and that we go together to hear Casals that evening. Since Mrs. Popper did not intend to go, he had an extra ticket. I felt privileged to take her seat, and to escort my teacher to the concert.

As I remember, the "Serenade" and "Chanson Villageoise" were on the program, and Casals played the "Mazurka" for one of his encores. We sat in the upper loge, in relative privacy. During the concert I watched Popper's reaction. His serious appraisal of the performance showed in the expression of his face, and he applauded after each number.[2] But a slight puzzlement veiled the otherwise interested countenance. The striking difference between the prevailing bowing with loose wrist and straight thumb, and Casals' bowing, seemed most obvious when he played at the upper part of the bow without lowering his wrist, and compensated by the gradual pronation and elevation of his arm. But the upper arm position was radically altered when the bow was applied on the "C" string. It was drawn in close to the body, with wrist fairly straight. These observations were possible because our loge was located on the second floor of the concert hall almost above the right side of the podium.

Another first impression was Casals' limited use of slides. These were accepted by nineteenth century string players as a technical device for large leaps, as well as for intensely expressive effects, without regard for the distortion of musical playing.

Casals had developed his unique style with an unconventional kind of fingerings which, among other things, employed frequent extensions. We were surprised and struck by his performance. His bowings and fingerings combined in the production of a flawless technical brilliance and a luminous tone, with infinite degrees of dynamic variation.

Following the concert we did not attempt to go back stage to congratulate Casals. It was impossible to reach the artist's room because the entrance was blocked by hundreds of autograph seekers. I found out later

that Popper and Casals had been involved in a discussion about gypsy music (probably in a restaurant or coffeehouse).[3]

We took the subway to his home, and I was grateful for the noise, which prevented any conversation. However, in the pauses of station stops, Popper made some general comments, such as: "beautiful tone," "excellent technique," "fine musicianship" and "splendid intonation." Then, finally, he said ". . . in spite of all these, he did not touch my heart!"

With this remark Popper indicated that the style of his own art was rooted in an earlier tradition, and that he felt uncomfortable when confronted with a new aesthetic language and a new cellistic technique.

Popper faced the challenging problem that every artist—musician, painter, poet or writer—experiences when the new generation comes forward with an innovation in style.[4] Popper's own playing had represented a move forward and away from the artists who preceded him. However, a link existed—a foothold from which to leap forward. But for him to be in full agreement now with the progressive trend would mean negation of lifelong convictions on which his art and his success had been built. At the present, there are movements which are drifting away from the type of performance which was new in the early twentieth century.

The profound revelation which I experienced when hearing Casals for the first time disturbed my loyalty to Popper. At that time, I was very confused. I was aware that I was witnessing a meeting of two giants of the 'cello, and I was quite overwhelmed both to my faith and admiration for my own teacher, Popper, and by the exciting and very convincing style of playing of the new musical sun on the horizon—Casals.

[1] *Neues Pester Journal* (Budapest), March 26, 1905.

[2] Casals recorded the following pieces by Popper: Chanson Villageoise, Victor 1083; Gavotte (Op. 23), Col. 68025 D; Mazurka (Op. 11), Col. A 5698; Serenade Espagnole (Op. 54), Col A 5650; Vito (Op. 54), Victor 1311; Chopin-Popper Nocturne in E flat, Victor 6589, LM 2699; and Col. 68024D, 8901M; Rubinstein-Popper Melody in F, Victor 1178, Victor LCT 1050; also Col. A 4649, Col. 68026D.

(A recently issued recording by Gayle Smith includes the following pieces by Popper: "Im Walde" Suite, Op. 50, Romanze, Op. 5, Mazurka, Op. 51, Gavotte, Op. 23, Sarabande & Gavotte, Op. 10, Nocturne, Op. 32, and Hungarian Rhapsody, Op. 68 on GS 1050).

[3] J. Ma. Corredor, *Conversations with Casals* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1956), p. 60.

[4] After hearing Strauss' *Salome* at the Opera House, Popper said: "It would have sounded just the same if the musicians had the music on the stand upside down."

Chapter XVI

The Final Show

French engraving of an orchestral quartet.

As the fall semester opened, in 1912, and a few new faces appeared in the class, Popper's interest in young people and in teaching was renewed. He seldom expressed pessimism openly—if there was any, it was disguised in whimsical humor.

But some definitely discouraging remarks had emerged in a letter of January 17, 1912. His soul was bruised from the recent tragedy, and he was sensitive to any apparent neglect, such as that which he felt he had received from the close friend to whom he was writing. Scattered through the letter are such melancholy phrases as ". . . the merciless passage of time that destroys youth and elegance . . ." and ". . . We are having more frost here than for many years. No wonder that my letter lacks the usual warmth! Our circle of many friends are trying constantly and touchingly to divert us. No mortal has yet discovered the magic potion for 'forgetting'!"

His quasi-adjustment to life was upset badly by another jolt at the beginning of the spring semester. Although Popper had no great affinity for Tchaikovsky, he did perform and teach some of his chamber music. A post card message—the "telephone" of the average household of the day—was sent to Zsámboki, dated February 3, 1913. Popper wrote: ". . . Please come to my house Wednesday about eleven o'clock and bring the score of the Tchaikovsky trio with you . . . Kind greetings, your

Popper." Thus was planned a rehearsal for a performance by students from Popper's chamber music class: the excellent violinist János Koncz, his own fine pupil—then in his final school year—Miklós Zsámboki, and pianist Ilonka Kabos (who was already a splendid artist, and who later became a teacher in London and New York).

When they were ready for the performance a dress rehearsal was held at the Academy—on March 3rd, the day before the concert. An early spring rain had chilled the sidewalk, and on the way home Popper slipped, and fractured his upper right arm.

In the next morning papers the accident was reported, and it was announced that his classes had been cancelled at the Academy for an indefinite period. As soon as we could discover if he was home, my friend and colleague, Hochleitner, went with me to Popper's house, to express our concern.

We entered the salon, where he was sitting in an arm-chair in his robe. Deep lines and circles under his eyes affirmed the physical and mental anguish he was experiencing. His arm was in a cast, resting in a sling.

I presented him with a bouquet, and Hochleitner warmly expressed our sympathy. His words must have hit a sensitive nerve, for the master covered his face saying, "I have had so much misfortune in my life!" and we were stunned to hear him softly sobbing. Fortunately, Hochleitner found the right words, assuring him that his great contributions to the world of music had earned him lasting gratitude, and that his loving pupils were eagerly waiting for his recovery, and that we would soon be able to resume our study again.

When we said goodbye, and emerged into the sunny spring weather so full of promise, our mood was subdued and low.

This unfortunate accident changed his way of life. Everything stopped. His arm was in a plaster cast for several weeks. He had to cancel teaching completely for three weeks, after which he resumed it but at home, while still wearing the cast. This activity stimulated his spirits. Mrs. Popper would serve little sandwiches of anchovy butter to the seven students, and the class took on the atmosphere of a gay tea party. Popper enjoyed this diversion, and relished his tea, and the cigarette which followed.

He was again able to walk to the Academy after the cast was removed. However, the arm still rested in a sling for many months more. Before the close of the semester, with some effort, he conducted a group of students in a presentation of a *Brandenburg Concerto* for strings and flutes, by Bach, holding the baton in his left hand. After several rehearsals, and with devoted cooperation from the students, the performance went well. He obviously was basking in the warm reception given by the audience on his first public appearance since the accident.

By the end of June, he was ready to leave for his summer vacation. He chose Baden, near Vienna, where he had spent many happy summers. Popper was still supporting his arm in a silken sling.

On the morning of July 1st I assisted Popper, carrying his Amati cello to a bank safe for the summer. In late afternoon of the same day, I saw him and Mrs. Popper off, as they boarded the Danube steamer which was to take them to Vienna.

This slow mode of travel, upstream on the river, held many pleasant moments. During the curving ride ancient castles and gently sloping mountains came into view. When dark descended and blotted out the world, only the glow from the windows of the little peasant houses gave reminder that life continued beyond the shadowy shores. The cabins of the steamer, though not luxurious, were comfortable. There were steamer chairs for those who wanted to stretch out, as if on a miniature transatlantic boat, but there was no danger of seasickness!

A pleasant journey was anticipated, with supper and breakfast in the ship's dining room, and a sunny morning arrival in Vienna. As we stood on the deck making last minute small talk, the deep horn of the ship gave the usual warning that visitors should leave. The sound of the chattering voices, the eager noise of the steam engine, commands from the bridge and clattering of chains were all dominated by the relentless sound of the ship's horn. The awesome overtones of this polyphonic tornado had a dramatic effect. A certain inevitability in the proceedings seemed to touch both him and me. As I said goodbye, Popper's old eyes exposed glittering tear drops. I was deeply puzzled as I crossed the bridge to the shore.

In Baden the Poppers stayed in a pleasant looking two-story pink stucco house named Zellerhof, in which their pension was located. Polite, soft-spoken maids attended to the needs of their guests. The pension was only a short walk from the park.

It was an appealing setting, in the southern region of the Vienna Woods. Popper was able to draw refreshment from communion with nature, and yet retain the conveniences to which he was accustomed. The spa was rich in thermal springs. And the woodsy fragrance of the fresh air, and of the black pine forests which surrounded the town, was invigorating.

The hills of the Vienna Woods are part of the Tyrolean Alps as they descend to this area. Slowly flowing streams are abundant, and along their banks a profusion of wild flowers and narrow paths provide for carefree strolling. One of these paths had been the favorite of Beethoven, which he used frequently while he was in residence in Baden.

The Kurhaus in the park held concerts, entertainments, and games.

Each day at noon and again in late afternoon a philharmonic orchestra played a concert, under a shell. Arranged in semi-circles facing the stage, the rows of chairs were always completely filled by the local residents and the summer visitors. They would all listen with a great deal of attention and concentration to—possibly—a Haydn *Symphony*, or a Strauss *Waltz*. The audience sat in rapt silence, receiving the blessed experience of the music. Stretching out onto the spacious terrace was a lavish coffeehouse.

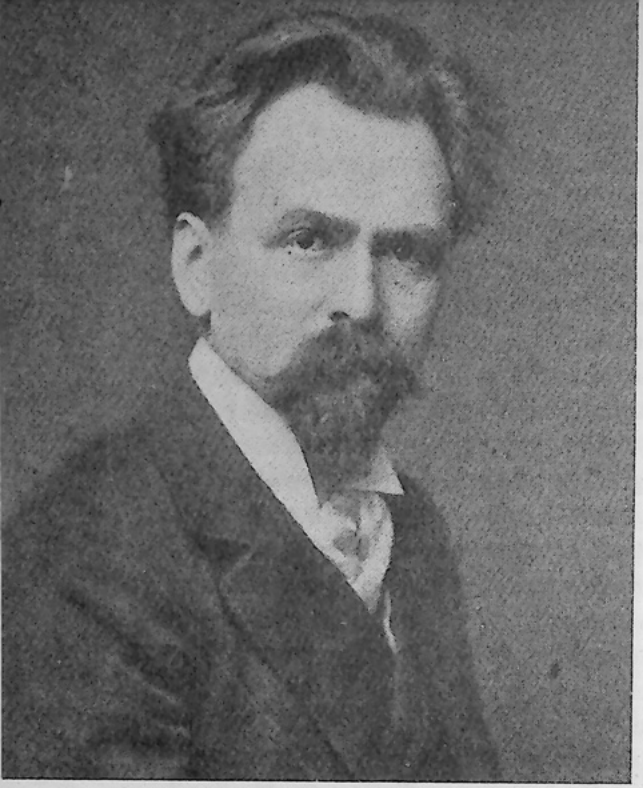
Thermal bathing facilities were available, to help repair ailing health and increase vigor for the aging. Seeking to restore the use of his right arm, Popper took advantage of the baths.

The progress of the healing of the injury can be vividly observed by comparing two postcards to Zsámboki. On May 5, 1913, Mrs. Popper wrote to him, on one of their supply of special postcards bearing Popper's photograph (from a more youthful period), replying from Budapest to Zsámboki's greetings from the country. Popper added a brief message in shaky, insecure writing: "heart-felt greetings to dear Miklós from his sick Popper." Curiously, the words "dear Miklós" and "sick" were written in Hungarian in contemporary script, the rest in the German gothic script which Popper always used in his letters. He placed the emphasis for his condition and for his warm affection for his pupil in Zsámboki's mother tongue. The second card, of July 24, 1913, from Baden, was a note of thanks written entirely by himself, and shows great improvement over the previous message. The script looks exactly like the old one of pre-accident days, with careful use of space, and symmetrical and evenly leaning letters:

". . . I am very glad that your [new] splendid cello gives so much joy and the ambition to practice. Henceforth we will bravely work up to the very highest position, which I already had in mind for you! I feel pretty good—With our best greetings to you and to your dear parents, your—Popper."

In the extremely title-conscious Austro-Hungarian Empire, the really significant titles were received directly from the Emperor. Varying degrees of rank were bestowed upon persons who held important political and administrative positions, or who contributed industrial wealth to the nation, and also on educators and artists who had achieved great reputations and had thus elevated the cultural standard of their native land. There were three important ranks known as Councillor: Privy Councillor, State Councillor, and Court Councillor. The last, called "Hofrat" in German, was the highest of these honors.

Two of the members of the Academy of Music—Mihalovich, and Hubay—had received the title of "Hofrat" several years earlier. Now, on



Jenö Hubay characterized Popper, the artist, as one who kept his passion under control and whose virtuosity never committed the sin of serving effects.

August 5th, Popper received official word in Baden that the Emperor, in honor of his seventieth birthday of July 18, 1913, and in recognition of his distinguished services to the State, had bestowed upon him also the title of Court Councillor ("Hofrat").

When the news reached him, it was not completely unexpected. In February before the accident, Count Apponyi—a former member of Parliament, and very close to the court—dropped in at Popper's apartment. Apponyi, who had been a cabinet member as Minister of Culture and Education, joined Popper in the salon behind carefully closed doors, in some discussion of moment. I just happened to be at the apartment at that time, which was possibly the occasion dictated by protocol when preliminary notification was given to Popper regarding the forthcoming honor.

Alas, Popper had only two days in which to enjoy the satisfaction and honor of his title! On August 7th, Hofrat and Frau Hofrat Popper strolled to the park after their dinner, to listen to the evening concert. On the program was "Dance Macabre" by Saint-Saëns.

Mrs. Popper told me later that at the end of the piece, her husband rose, saying that he felt chilly and wanted to go home. Then, during the night, he had a brief heart attack which ended his life. Fate had granted him a mercifully quick demise.

A Viennese musical trade paper reported the Emperor's recognition and Popper's sudden death at almost the same time, observing that the honor had been long over-due, and that not only should Popper have received it sooner, but that musicians as a group were becoming highly eligible for such distinction.

An article of reminiscence concerning Popper appeared in Budapest, a few days later. Following are excerpts:

"Great virtuosos of the cello were for a long time much more rare than great violinists. The reason is that the cello as solo instrument can only gain stature in the hands of masters . . . Without them the instrument would have remained in the confines of chamber music . . . Of all the famous cellists I have heard, all of them were surpassed by Davidoff in scope of style and powerful tone . . . But in quality of performance, highest musicianship, beauty of tone and consummate technique, Popper could be easily matched against everyone . . . Besides, he qualifies as the most successful and most played composer for his instrument. In the whole world where there are cellists, his pieces will be played for many years."[1]

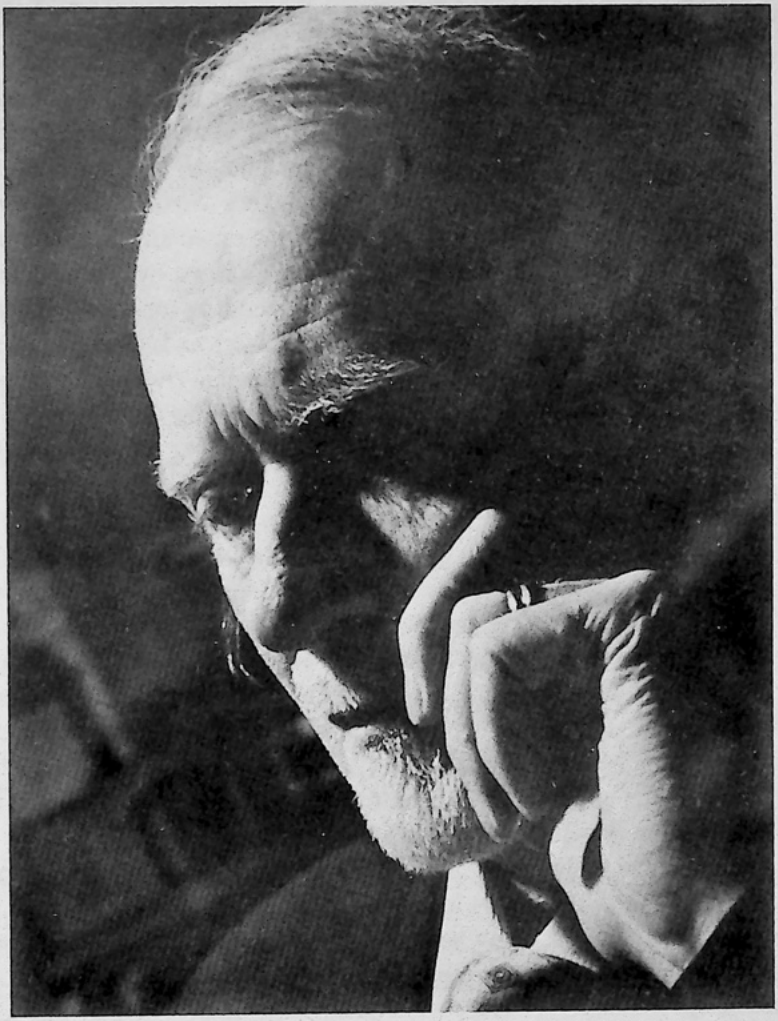
According to his wish, Popper received a penetrating stab in the heart before the body was shipped to Dresden for cremation. At a simple ceremony attended by his family and friends, and also according to his wishes, Schubert's "Du bist die Ruh" was played by a group of musicians. No other song would have been more appropriate than this one for the ceremony which sent him on his eternal journey. This was the song which had started him on his world fame, and the one which had been closest to his heart of all of Schubert's lieder, a fitting tribute for a troubadour.

The fall semester opened in September with the student body and faculty gathered in the concert hall to eulogize the beloved friend and prominent member of the faculty. The Academy of Music had issued hundreds of black-bordered announcements of his death.

A new face was present among the professors sitting on the stage—Jenö Kerpely, a former pupil of Popper, who was to take his chair on the faculty. He was an excellent musician and cellist and, particularly in his activities with the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet, represented the avant-garde of Hungarian music. They had been the first to play Bartók and Kodály, or Dohnányi and Weiner. Two years later, Kerpely would play the first performance of the now-famous *Sonata for Solo Cello,* by Kodály, who would dedicate it to him.

Hubay delivered an eloquent eulogy, in which he summarized Popper's contribution to Hungarian musical culture, and reminisced

Bela Bartók's work was first played by the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet, the avant-garde of Hungarian music. Jenö Kerpely, excellent musician and cellist, was a former pupil of Popper.



Zoltan Kodály, illustrious Hungarian composer (1882-1967), whose work was first performed by the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet, particularly Kodály's famous Sonata for Solo Cello.

from twenty-seven years of friendship and musical partnership. He characterized Popper, the artist, as one who kept his passion under control, and whose virtuosity never committed the sin of serving effects.

Hubay recalled an incident from February 25th, about a week before the accident, during a musical evening at his house. They played the famous brooding melancholy music of Mozart's *String Quintet in C minor.* Hubay sensed that Popper's playing was especially inspired, and that his guests as well as himself were deeply touched by the unusually disconsolate mood of the music, and the heart-rending tone that emerged from Popper's cello. There is no doubt that Mozart had filled this music with a sense of foreboding. But in recalling this "swan-song" performance of Popper, Hubay seemed to remember a feeling of Popper's own anticipation of death and grief. Possibly the preceding sorrows had left Popper apprehensive of further misfortune.

The day of February 18, 1914 was devoted to two memorial functions. In the morning a commemorative tablet was unveiled, and in the evening a concert was held in the great concert hall, as final tribute. A large black marble tablet, with a bronze profile plaque of Popper at its center, bore the eloquently expressed sentiments of the last seven of Popper's pupils, in words set down by Árpád Szendy. Zsámboki had been chiefly responsible for the commemorative project, and had secured the cooperation of the Academy of Music for permission to place the tablet in the wall of Popper's studio—a spacious bright room on the second floor of the building, with a Bösendorfer concert grand in the middle.

In the presence of Director Mihalovich and faculty, former students, Mrs. Popper, and relatives—including his daughter Celeste and his brother William—a ceremony was held in this room. Before the unveiling, Zsámboki presented the tablet to the Academy of Music, with the following speech:

"We, the pupils of our deceased master, David Popper, with deep emotion are gathered in this room, so that in connection with the memorial concert, which will take place tonight, we might express our debt to our unforgettable master, and express our own humble mourning.

"Here, in this chamber, during the last five years of his life, which he completely devoted to his pupils, and during which he was seldom heard by the public, in the role of the ideal teacher and educator, he guided his enthusiastic pupils with fatherly love, in their art.

"Somehow, his sunny presence consecrated this place, and the memory of his art, and the precious demonstrations of his guidance, filled our hearts with devotion. After each lesson we felt that our lives had become richer, and more noble and beautiful.

"Therefore, we, the last seven of his pupils, in whom the memory of

Stephen De'ak in a youthful photo made at the time of his concert debut in Budapest, 1919. De'ak studied under the Master, David Popper from 1911-1913.

him lives most vividly, and the pain of the wound of sorrow throbs most hurtfully for him, wish to perpetuate his dear presence with this tablet.

"Sooner or later we will have to leave this place, full of beautiful memories. New student generations will follow, who will be able to visualize and gain some conception through the evidence of the stature of this immortal artist, composer, and teacher—the lovable and harmonious personality—in a Greek sense 'Kalokagathos', the noble and heroically splendid man.

"In addition to his likeness, by the sculptor Ede Telcs, let there also be in this room, for future generations, those few words of classic beauty, by Árpád Szendy, which so faithfully express our feelings, as follows: 'In this place David Popper instilled in our souls love and enthusiasm for art, and wonderment for his personal greatness as an artist.

" 'The world, which he lifted through the magic of his genius, sensed him. But we, to whom he revealed the treasures of his art with masterly hands, understood his immortality. In our grateful hearts we cherish his memory. Géza Belle, Judith Bokor, István De'ak, Ildiko Gedeon, Gyula Hochleitner, Rózsi Schwartz, Miklós Zsámboki.' "

Following the speech of presentation, the tablet was unveiled, and Popper's *Requiem for Three Cellos* was performed by Zsámboki, Belle, and De'ak. The *Requiem,* and the poem which was its preface, had been dedicated to his good friend Daniel Rahter, one of his first publishers, upon his death. The poem which Popper had written in 1892, echoed the dedication of all present on this touching occasion:

"Tears, that turned to music,
By true friendship glorified,
Love that can never end,
Through devotion sanctified.
Take this offering so small
To your weary breast,
Take this song of sorrow,
Consolation, and sweet rest."

The evening concert on the same date, was directed by Hubay. The opening number was the "Funeral March" from the *Eroica Symphony* by Beethoven. The balance of the program consisted entirely of works by Popper—first, another performance of the *Requiem,* this time played by faculty members Schiffer and Kerpely, with one pupil, Zsámboki, and using orchestral accompaniment. This was followed by the *E minor Concerto,* played by Kerpely. Then Madame Körmendy-Frim sang "Notre Dame de Lourdes," with 'cello obligato played by Imre Hartmann, and Martha Linz performed two violin solos—"Printemps d'Amour" and "Pastorale." The final number was the *Im Walde* Suite, presented by Schiffer with orchestra.

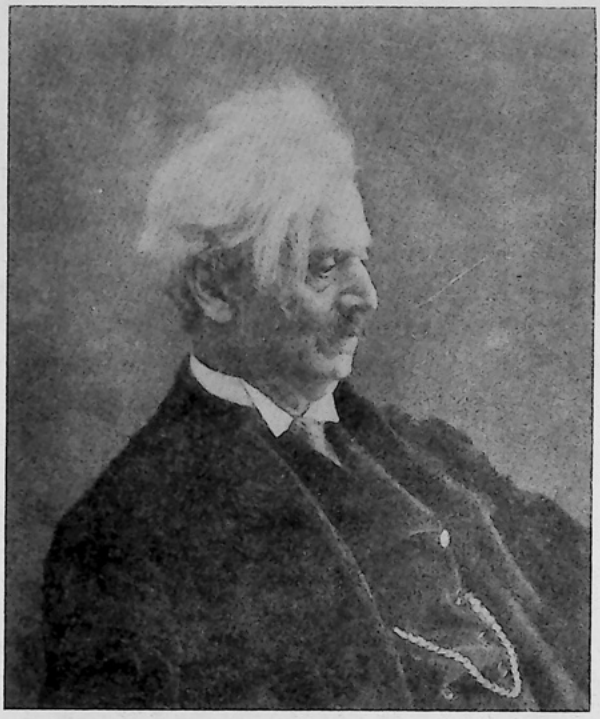
Thus was completed a loving tribute to a man who had served his adopted country's musical life devotedly for twenty-seven years. He had done much to contribute to the vitality of the Academy of Music, which is today a cultural force at the international level, in many facets of the creative and performing musical arts.

[1]Alfred Fischof, *Pester Lloyd* (Budapest, August 13, 1913).

On the facing page: Stephen De'ak with master class at Wichita University, 1931.

Chapter XVII

Teacher



Popper was associated with the Hungarian Royal Academy of Music for twenty-seven years.

When Popper went to the Royal Hungarian Academy of Music to assume the professorship, his fame was based on his role as a virtuoso, and composer for his instrument. He had taught sporadically, between tours, but previous to 1886 he had no affiliation with any music school. Therefore his credentials were the sum of the attainments which had lifted him above his contemporaries: a strong artistic individuality, flawless technique, immaculate intonation, an intimate communication with the audience through a charismatic personality and poetic projection of short pieces which penetrated to the hearts of his listeners.

All these capacities served him well as a concert artist, and as he brought them into the classroom the students were given the opportunity to harvest the musical and cellistic wealth offered to them by a master. However, very much depended on the pupil's ability to absorb Popper's demonstrations and criticisms, and to apply them during long hours of solitary practice. Popper was convinced that self-critical practicing brought a development of individuality, and that his imposition of a uniform discipline upon the students was not the most essential part of teaching.

Back in 1932, when I returned for a visit to my native city, I spoke with some of my older colleagues about Popper as a teacher. They agreed with

me in this same appraisal of his teaching objectives. He had three concerns: musical interpretation, articulate technique and the conscious effort to produce tonal beauty.

Popper's colorful palette distinguished him from other virtuosos. Even back in 1863, a critic in Leipzig attacked Popper for his "continuous vibrato"[1], and an argument flared up in the press pro and con its aesthetic value. Except on long cantilena tones, vibrato was not commonly used in those days. But Popper applied vibrato on short tones also (tempo permitting). Thus the expression "continuous vibrato" was invented, and the phenomenon objected to by some minority critics. They did not realize the infinite variety of tone production and changing tone color offered in this manner. During Popper's class instructions and concerts, the same vibrato and tonal spark were still prevalent, even in his late sixties.

As soon as he entered, Popper's gentle humor and personality lighted up the classroom. All students felt that their perception sharpened with each lesson, whether from his criticism or from his personal demonstration. There prevailed a certain harmonious atmosphere—never a negative display of temperamental impatience. The attribute of "charm" so often mentioned in reviews of his concerts was part of his classroom personality.

Because of the popularity of Popper's concert pieces, a novice entering his class was already familiar with certain technical skills expected of him. Popper's innovations in cello technique were laid down in his forty great studies, which became part of the curriculum after their publication, so that he was then free to devote less of his attention to technical studies than to the concertos of Haydn, Boccherini, Schumann, Saint-Saëns, Volkmann and Molique, and to the sonatas by baroque composers. The *Six Suites* for cello solo by Bach were neglected by Popper. They were not part of the usual concert repertoire, having been first published, in 1825 in Germany, as *Sonatas or Studies.* Not until Casals played all the movements in each suite, did they begin to be heard in concerts. Popper played only movements from them, on a few programs.

Popper had empathy for the individual. It may have been an overindulgence of this particular human trait which brought about the discussion between Kodály and Popper, which the former described as follows:

"As a young teacher, between 1908 and 1909, I gave the lowest possible grade to a pupil of Popper who was supposed to learn harmony in my class. The student seldom showed up for lessons, and consequently learned nothing.

"Popper approached me, requesting that I give the student a passing grade, in order to let him move to the next level, and saying that the

young man would make an adequate player. (Kodály quoted Popper as using the German word 'Musikant,' which indicates a musician of lowly qualifications—one equipped with the ability to play for a living, but who is not an educated artist). Kodály continued:

". . . 'Dear Master,' I said to him, 'I thought that we were teaching people to become musicians, and not 'musikants' " . . .

"Undoubtedly, Popper did not urge his pupils to absorb all the musical subjects offered by the school's theory department; therefore, a lot of clever-handed but empty-headed half-musicians graduated at the institute."[2]

Had it been recorded, it would be interesting to know Popper's answer to Kodály's remarks. Popper had himself received full musical training at the Prague Conservatory, and consequently he knew the importance of a complete musical education. But Popper had a pragmatic outlook concerning the economic future of a student with an average talent. In those days families often lived at a very low income level, with little economic security. He knew that "clever-handed" work can be more satisfying, even if somewhat "empty-headed" than "full-headed" starvation.

In retrospect, Kodály may have greatly generalized when making his comment. However, his judgment was correct as to the true goal of an institution of musical learning, which must keep its standards as high as possible.

Like most of his colleagues with a good pianistic background, Popper conducted his class from the piano, occasionally taking the cello from a pupil to show his preferred phrasing. I have no doubt that critical efficiency on the teacher's part is considerably curtailed if he concentrates on the piano part and does not fully watch and listen to the student's performance. A similar hindrance of the pupil's progress can result from the teacher playing with the student on the cello. These teaching habits persisted long beyond the turn of the century, when teachers began to apply a strict analytical approach.

Naturally, the class room resounded with Popper's compositions. Playing for him those effective pieces which were popular all over the world, with him performing the piano part, was a gratifying experience for all of us. His four concertos were also part of our repertoire, and he took special pleasure in the orchestral tuttis: when he entered in brilliantly on the piano the music would reverberate from the walls of the room.

Popper readily accompanied his students, whether in his compositions or in other works. His piano playing was clear, with strong rhythmic emphasis on inner voice leading in the accompaniment. Sometimes he spontaneously improvised an accompaniment, if the student gave a specially

fine performance of one of his studies. It was inspiring to hear the Master's creative involvement in his own work.

One of his pupils, Mici Lukács, recalls that following her private lessons Popper would often entertain her with selections from his favorite operas by Verdi, Rossini, or Mozart, which he would play on the piano.

The pianist Arthur Friedheim related an anecdote of an interesting pianistic feat on the part of Popper, which took place during one of his visits to London. It was also a demonstration of Popper's phenomenal memory. At a musical evening at the house of Mr. Hecht, who was a treasurer of the London House of Rothschild, several musicians were present—among them, conductor Mottle, violinist Sauret, Popper and Friedheim. An impasse is described by Friedheim:

". . . At midnight, Sauret suddenly declared that he *must* play Beethoven's Violin Concerto. 'Hurry up, Friedheim,' commanded Popper. 'March to the piano and accompany him!' 'But I do not play it from memory,' I objected. 'Very well, then, I shall take your place,' said Popper, and seating himself at the piano, the eminent cellist played from memory for the violinist Sauret the piano part of the first movement, and the admiration of everyone present was obviously sincere . . ."[3]

A very moving eulogy by Van der Straeten appeared in a London musical journal after Popper's death. He reported an almost identical incident to that described by Friedheim—one which had occurred at his London home, in 1897, following a Philharmonic concert at which Popper had been soloist:

". . . a memorable evening was spent at the writer's house . . . Popper played 'Herbstblume' from his Suite *Im Walde*, and then asked Mr. Sauret to play something. The latter chose the first movement of Beethoven's *Concerto.* As no copy of the music was at hand, Popper sat down to the piano and, without a moment's hesitation, commenced the 'Tutti,' playing by heart. To the astonishment of all he played the whole accompaniment from memory with a delicacy of touch and beauty and phrasing which would put many a solo pianist to shame. Moreoever, it was evident from the way he treated the various instrumental entries that it was not the piano part but the orchestral accompaniment which he remembered. It is a fact known to few that Popper was an accomplished pianist . . ."[4]

Popper expressed special enthusiasm for his chamber music sessions. These were each three hours long, yet he did not seem to get tired. He enjoyed the string quartet repertoire, which he considered the highest

form of musical composition. He held a deep reverence for the classical masters.

He expected from his students that they study the score and become familiar with all the parts, not only their own. Popper demanded a classical purity and strong rhythmic articulation.

In his chamber music classes, Popper was very firm with quartet members. He often demonstrated his own infallible memory by going to the piano, when a student had lost his place, and playing the missing part until the student relocated his place in the music.

Popper's favorite composers were—in this order—Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Mici Lukács, who was his pupil in the early 1900's wrote to me of the following incident, which reveals his preference, plus his tact and direct interest toward his pupils:

"Our group decided to study Schubert's *Death and the Maiden Quartet.* Of course, we chose something very grand, and worked really very hard to learn it. When we thought it good enough to play it in the lesson we asked for permission.

"We played the first movement, and when we finished Popper said:

'Children, this is a marvelous effort, but the next quartet you'll play for me will be Haydn!'

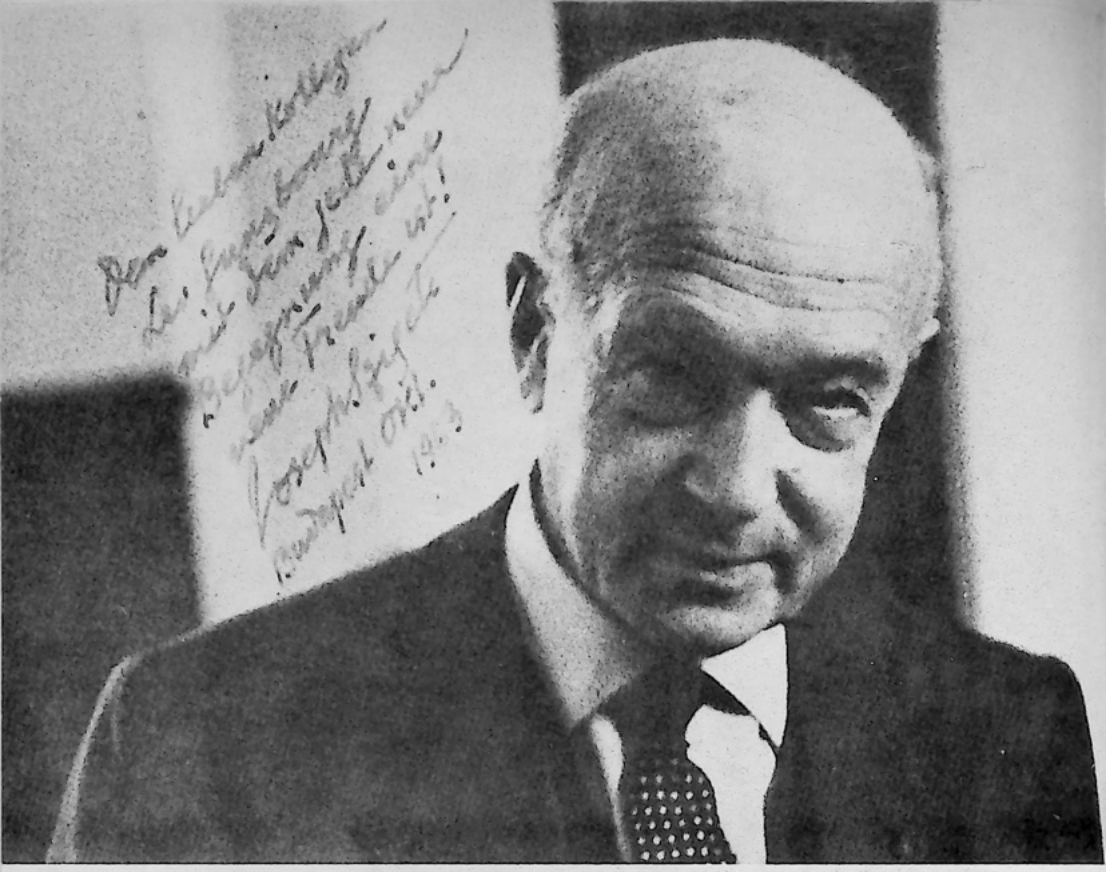
"Popper saw how unhappy we were, and told us that to play Haydn perfectly is the most difficult to do. What he said was a great consolation to us, and we realized that to achieve perfection is the final goal."

Describing his experience in these classes, Eugene Ormandy gave the following account:

"My recollection of Popper goes back to the time when I became the pupil of Hubay, and the viola, being one of the secondary subjects I should have taken, was too large for my arm, being just 9½ years old at the time, and I was sent to the chamber music and string quartet classes until I was tall enough to play the viola. This is how I met Popper who, as you know, was the head of the string quartet classes. I turned out to be a good sight-reader so he used me more often than perhaps other students, thus giving me a wonderful opportunity to acquaint myself with a large part of the string quartet literature under one of the great string quartet players of his day. At that time I did not realize how much this would help me later on in my career, especially when I suddenly found myself to be a conductor—a position which was forced upon me after substitution for another conductor who became ill at the last minute.

"Popper was extremely nice to me throughout my formative years, and when I told him at the age of 14½ that I was graduating from the Academy and thanked him for his wonderful help he gave me a small

Eugene Ormandy studied at the Royal Music Academy in Budapest under Hubay and Popper.



Joseph Szigeti recalled in his memoirs, With Strings Attached, *his experience in the chamber music classes under David Popper at the Hungarian Royal Academy of Music.*

gold lyre with a diamond in the center, which I proudly wore on all my concert attire for years. I am in Popper's debt forever for his wonderful teaching."[5]

Szigeti also told of being in the chamber music classes under Popper:

"Popper . . . was my teacher in quartet playing. Unfortunately these quartet lessons were more or less 'token lessons,' for I do not remember having frequented them so assiduously as I should have done. After I had 'performed' a Haydn quartet that David Popper had monitored for a school concert, my attendance at the Popper quartet classes seems to have become more and more irregular. What was responsible for these regrettable lapses was the obsession for exhibitionistic virtuosity that guided us 'prodigies-elect' in the Hubay classes . . ."[6]

For many years preceding the publication of the *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels,* the technique of the violoncello had been passing through an evolution. Much of the fresh material which expanded the scope of cello technique, and which can be found in his most popular pieces, are also discovered in broadly expanded form in the great études.

His technical principles, innovations, and practical applications of the modern cello technique (of the late nineteenth century) were put down in these forty études. They were published in four volumes of ten études each, and appeared between the years 1901 and 1905. In his classes it was good form to play his études from memory, though he did not insist on it.

The contemporary composer of any period frequently confronts the virtuosos with unfamiliar problems of style, or problematic technical demands. The virtuoso must find freshly conceived technical adjustments with which to meet such challenges.

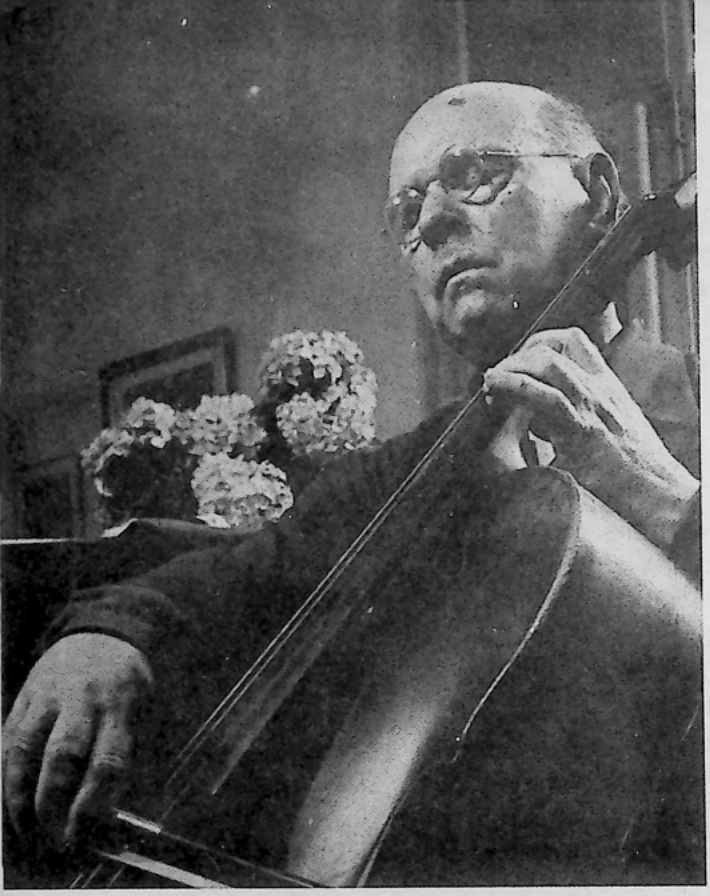
If the virtuoso is himself a skillful composer he is able to create studies by means of which technical innovations become firmly established as part of a standard equipment. While the increased technical facility helps in the playing of modern literature, it also revitalizes performance of music from an earlier period. A new technical approach to old difficulties can often awaken fresh meaning and beauty.

Among those who wrote violoncello studies very few realized an ideal synthesis—pleasing and interesting music of excellent form which clearly projects a virtuoso technique. The forty studies of Popper's *Hohe Schule* are among the finest of such works. They provide a balanced fare of music and of technical innovation for the violoncellist. Many of the studies explore the technical problems which Popper had met in the music of his contemporaries such as Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz, Schumann, Saint-Saëns and Volkmann, as well as those he had introduced into his own concert pieces.

Popper used fingerings designed to cope with the technical demands of the modern music of his time, and fitting his artistic purposes. Today the studies, because of their musical interest, inspire the student to develop a higher proficiency, and to build a reserve of technical resources.

Studies written for string instrument alone are necessarily constructed in monodic style, and usually based on short motives in sequential progressions. Unless the student can derive musical stimulus as well as technical training from the world, practicing could become a boring mechanical experience. Popper succeeded admirably in his studies, placing the emphasis on the harmonic and rhythmic aspects of the horizontal structure with creative zeal, as it progresses through cadences, and modulations, sometimes to distant keys. At the same time, the formal proportions and balance are maintained. Rhythmic piquancy is contrasted with strong rhythmic chords. In some of the studies a lyric mood predominates.

Most of the studies are written in keys which use four, five, or six sharps or flats in the signature. Ten studies—Numbers 9, 13, 15, 17, 20, 23, 24, 29, 34 and 39—are either completely or partly concerned with the



Not until Pablo Casals played all the movements in Six Suites *for cello solo by Bach did they begin to be heard in concerts. Popper played movements from the suites on only a few programs.*

technique of double stops. Study #37 is devoted to mordents. Arpeggios in thumb position, involving rapid position changes, natural and artificial harmonics, chromatic octaves and thirds in scale passages are very effectively interspersed as part of the texture of the studies.

Obviously, Wagnerian motives are used in a few of the studies, for practical reasons. He wrote the so-called "Lohengrin Étude" #19 when he was solo cellist in Vienna, taking a fragment from Act Three, Scene Three of the opera. When well learned, this study helped the orchestra cellists to perform the repeating figure in the first hundred and eleven measures in the score with ease. The rhythmic pattern characteristic of *Walküre* Act Three, Scene One, is used in Study #5, and developed in an intricate and agitated manner.

Some of his studies were inspired—as he told me—during his long train journeys on his tours. For instance, in #36, the rapid ascending and descending diatonic scales suggest the momentum of a train.

In #28 there is an innovation in left hand dexterity: while a little motive is executed on the "D" string, a delicate figuration accompanies it on the "A" string. It is a virtuoso piece, with the left hand leaping rapidly back and forth over two-octave intervals, for an exciting effect in the coda.

Little emphasis is placed on bowing technique, except in #27, which is a study in spiccato, and #14 and #32, which are both played staccato.

Since Popper's time there have emerged various schools, and great exponents, of bow manipulations. In 1902 the eminent physiologist Dr. F. A. Steinhausen published his book, *The Physiology of Bowing on String Instruments.* Up until then, teachers had rarely taught technique, for either the left or the right hand, from a physiological point of view. By 1920, when Steinhausen's book reached the fourth edition, his theories had become well-known. He gave momentum to analytical teaching and reinforced those artists who had arrived empirically at the correct bowing, enlightening those who were in doubt concerning their own bowing.

Popper was not involved in such new and scientific theories. Like all representatives of the German schools in the nineteenth century, he used bowing with a flexible wrist, as derived from Romberg's *Method.* However, he was praised for his delicate nuances and versatile bow technique, judged as remarkable as his left hand technique.

The *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels* is a solution of many technical challenges in the "modern" idiom of his day. It remains a great legacy for the present-day student cellist, evoking not only Popper's virtuosity and musicianship, but also making vivid his creative personality as composer and teacher.

It would be useless to try to reconstruct a complete list of Popper's pupils. During his twenty-seven years of teaching at the Academy, and including those who took private lessons, they obviously number over two hundred. I came to know some of them personally, and others by reputation. Most became teachers and members of orchestras. The list below is in alphabetical order, and such information concerning their careers as is known to me follows their names.

Altschul, Miksa—Teacher, and Solo cellist of Budapest Symphony.

Bergman, Sándor—Opera Orchestra and Philharmonic, Budapest.

Csuka, Béla—Solo cellist of Budapest Opera.

Darbishure, C.—Teacher in England.

De'ak, Stephen (Deák, István)—Teacher at Curtis and Peabody Institutes; Professor Emeritus, University of Southern Calif.

Földesy, Arnold—Solo cellist of Budapest Opera, teacher at National Conservatory; concertized with great success.

Füredi, Samu—Teacher at Debrecen Conservatory.

Hajdu, István—Teacher at Miskolc Conservatory.

Humphry, Richard—Teacher in London.

Jäger, Hugo—Solo cellist in one of Germany's orchestras. At one time, member of Hellmesberger Quartet.

Kerpely, Jenö—Teacher at Academy, taking Popper's chair upon his

Stephen De'ak (above) was a teacher at Curtis and Peabody Institutes, and Professor Emeritus of the University of Southern California. In 1931 Stephen De'ak met and married Margaret Shanklin (below), a piano student at Curtis. Mrs. De'ak studied piano under Moiseiwitch and later in Budapest with Professor Thoman, a pupil of Liszt. Beginning in 1931 Margaret became Stephen De'ak's piano accompanist.

death, remaining there from 1913-47. After that, was teacher at Redlands University in California.

Lebell, Ludwig—Teacher at Trinity College in London.

Lukács, Mici—Soloist, Vienna and London.

Mahalek, Dezsö—Teacher in Canada.

Schiffer, Adolf—Teacher at Royal Academy of Music in Budapest.

Schulzer, Joseph—Solo cellist at Vienna Opera (1888).

Surányi, Lipót—Opera Orchestra and Philharmonic, Budapest.

Son, Harry—Solo cellist of Budapest Opera and teacher at Fodor Conservatory.

Vikár, George—Solo cellist Budapest Volks Opera and teacher at National Conservatory.

Weiss, Arthur—Member of San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

Zsámboki, Miklós—Teacher at Royal Academy of Music, Budapest, 1922-62.

Zupancsics, Vilmos—Teacher at Pécs Conservatory.

Needless to say, their activities date from 1886 on. As this was just a fragment of the total group the number indicates that Liszt's reasoning, when the Academy was founded, that teachers of international stature should be engaged at the first, in order to attract native talents, was correct.

[1]Vibrato is an oscillation of the hand and forearm from a point of fingertip pressure on the string. The size of the to-and-fro movement is called the "amplitude" of the vibrato. The dimension of the amplitude depends on the desired dynamic and the frequency of the tone.

[2]Zoltán Kodály, *Visszatekintées (Looking Back)* (Budapest: Zenemükiadó, 1964).

[3]Arthur Friedheim, *Life and Liszt* (New York: Toplinger Publishing Co., 1961).

[4]*The Strad* (London), January, 1914.

[5]Information in a letter to the author from Eugene Ormandy May 8, 1973.

[6]Joseph Szigeti, *With Strings Attached* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947) p. 37.

Chapter XVIII

Composer

Popper's harmony was rooted in the late nineteenth century romantic language, and always used the best sounding register of the cello.

Popper's popularity as a composer and a performer could be attributed in part to the elements in his music which mirrored the public taste for zestful entertainment. His compositions seldom spoke of deep human sentiment or dwelt on life's shadowy riddles. Strong dramatic utterances are not to be found, but they were compensated for by light-hearted episodic impressions, moments of poetic moods and character pieces which were illuminated with wit and humor.

By these qualities he was directed to express himself in small forms. Even in his concertos, he adhered to this tendency. He made use of reiterations of original thematic ideas and the grouping of musical thoughts in sectional order, instead of the classic technique of development used in the sonata-concerto style.

Popper's harmony was rooted in the late nineteenth century romantic language, and always used the best sounding register of the cello. His rhythm is diverse, uplifting and playful. Like many of his contemporaries he was influenced by Mendelssohn and Schumann, and as a very young man he was under the spell of Wagner. His interest in Brahms' music was demonstrated by his consistent concert collaboration, playing his chamber music and sonatas with him. Yet there is no trace of Popper's emulating Brahms' chief historical contribution; the blending of the classic and the romantic elements into one personal style.

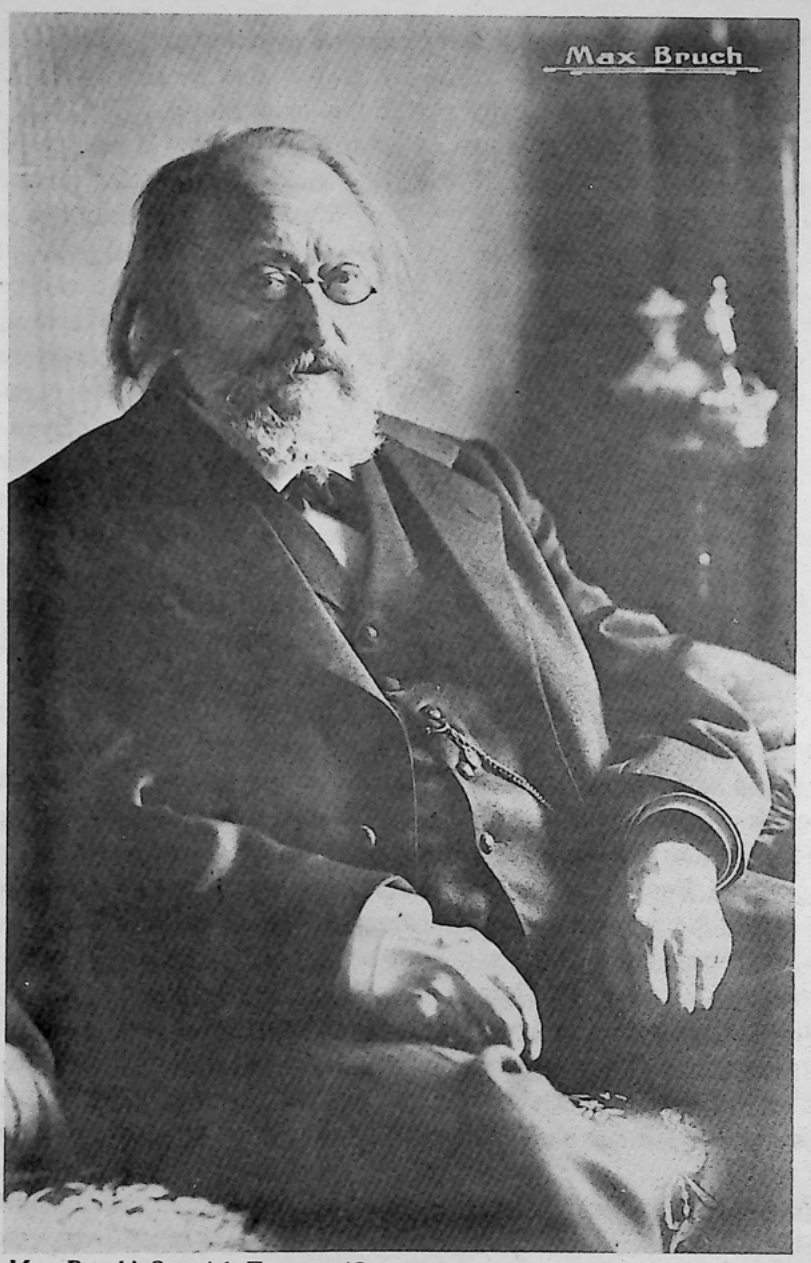
Other than those in larger forms, his compositions can be classified as: (1) character pieces, (2) national dances, (3) pieces in baroque style and (4) pieces in poetic mood. They suited his liking for small forms and miniature creation. When the *Six Character Pieces* (Op. 3) were published, numbers one and four, the "Papillon" and the "Arlequin," launched him on the road to renown. "Elfentanz" (Op. 39) and "Spinning Song" (Op. 55) are virtuoso pieces which also achieved phenomenal popularity.

The last two, and "Tarantella" (Op. 33), all represent certain innovations in technical virtuosity which in those days were quite unique. "Elfentanz" is a marathon piece of five pages of uninterrupted spiccato bowing, in sixteenth notes. It demands perfect coordination between right and left hand, and its tempo requires that eight notes be played per second. Left hand sequences in descending figurations lie in the twentieth position, in the highest possible register on the cello. The work was published with both piano and orchestra accompaniments, but it is most effective with orchestral accompaniment, because the more colorful background gives the illusion of the world of fantasy. The score includes playfully brilliant and varied effects suggesting the dancing elves, their frolicsome dalliance, and mystical overtones.

"Spinning Song," which became very well-known, is one of the two concert études included under the Opus number 55. The theme is executed in rapid finger strokes, while the tone seeming to be sustained below is actually heard between tones of the figuration of the theme, giving the illusion of a humming sound and the whirling motion of the spinning wheel. Popper brilliantly stated the thematic idea as it soars above the monotone sound. Like the "Elfentanz," this piece is an endurance test, requiring twenty-four sixteenth notes per bow stroke. The speed demands quick changes of hand positions and finger dexterity with rapidly hammering action. When gut strings were used, as in Popper's day, this was an overwhelming task for the cellist. With the modern use of steel strings, which lie closer to the surface of the fingerboard, considerably less force is needed for the finger's hammer stroke to depress the string.

Popper's "Tarantella" was a sweeping success when it was introduced for the first time. The work depicts the spirit of this south Italian dance with such captivating force that, from the start, the listeners are immediately made aware of its virtuoso demands. As the piece rushes with mad urgency toward its presto coda, it is always met with great acclaim. It was a new experience to hear such frenzied music on an instrument which had been basically adapted for a lyric mood.

Those dances in national character which were the most successful of his works in the genre, and endured the longest, were: "Mazurka" (Op.



Max Bruch's Scottish Fantasy *(Opus 46) preceded David Popper's "Scotch Fantasia" (Opus 71) for cello and piano, which Popper performed in Edinburgh, Scotland, 1897.*

11), "Tarantella" (Op. 33), "Polonaise de Concert" (Op. 14), and *Five Spanish Dances* (Op. 54). Another piece with nationalistic flavor, the "Chanson Villageoise," is an enchanting little work in French style, and in excellently proportioned form.

His nationalistic pieces of larger form include three compositions: *Russian Phantasy, Hungarian Rhapsody,* and *Scotch Fantasia.* The *Russian Phantasy* (Op. 43), for cello and orchestra, was published in 1881. It was written on themes from Little Russia, and is singular in its form as the main body of the work is a group of six variations. These all follow the harmonic structure of the theme, but certain variations depict some programmatic idea. Variation No. three recalls the sweeping flight of the sleigh, with glissandos in harmonics imitating the "swish" of the whip. Variation No. four echoes the vastness of the lonely snow-blanketed steppes, and a whining wind. Variation No. five is reminiscent of the swaying, undulating movement of the sleigh, with arpeggios in rapid thumb position changes. Variation No. six bursts into a brilliant dance with a pulsating rhythmic effect in passages of double stops and octaves. A final section of the piece is based on another dance theme, and as it develops momentum becomes a fast, virtuoso display of double stops, octaves and natural harmonics.

The "Hungarian Rhapsody" (Op. 68) for cello and orchestra was written after Popper had lived in Hungary for eleven years. It imitates a treatment of folk songs and dances in the gypsy manner, with alternating slow and fast sections connected by free improvisation-like cadenzas. Some of the slow passages are melancholy, and most of the rapid music is in the Hungarian two-four time, familiar as the "csárdás" rhythm. Considering the popularity of Liszt's Rhapsodies and of Brahms' Hungarian Dances, it is no wonder that this piece was welcomed all over the world.

The "Scotch Fantasia" (Op. 71) for cello and piano was written after several visits to Scotland, where he gathered native melodies. It was more or less an occasional piece, offered to the Scottish public as a complimentary gesture. It was only casually welcomed by the critics when Popper played it in Edinburgh, in 1897. Possibly the earlier work, for violin and orchestra—Scottish Fantasy (Op. 46) by the symphonist Max Bruch—had made a much greater impression.

Popper's interest in national music was motivated by his travels. It is noteworthy that he was not drawn toward the national music of his homeland, where he had spent the first eighteen years of his life. Those were the years during which Smetana was eagerly promoting Czech national music. Even in Prague Popper's schooling had been strongly under the German influence, and having left there in early years he was not much exposed to the Czech idiom.

A very poetic work, and one which was of great importance in his career, is the *Im Walde* Suite with orchestra, comprised of six movements the titles of which each tell, in a programmatic manner, of one incident related to a day in the forest. The suite is a romantic expression of communion with nature, and contains some of Popper's most inspired slow movements. It was played by many concert artists throughout Europe, and published as Op. 50, in 1880. The exquisite orchestration of *Im Walde* is an example of an economical, yet colorful, background with full support for the soloist.

The *Suite for Two Violoncellos* (Op. 16) has five movements: (1) *Andante grazioso,* (2) *Gavotte,* (3) *Scherzo,* (4) *Largo espressivo,* and (5) *Marcia, Finale.* The complete harmonic satisfaction of the composition is accomplished by the frequent use of double stops, especially in the second cello part. (It was also published for single cello and piano).

The last movement demands more virtuosity from the players than the others, and because of its extreme difficulty Popper had published sometime later, under the same Op. 16, an additional short work for two violoncellos or violoncello and piano, called *Tempo di Marcia,* which was intended for use with the *Suite* as a substitute for the original fifth movement, *Marcia, Finale,* if wished.

The *String Quartet* (Op. 74) was written in 1903. The first performance was given on February 9, 1904, by the Hubay-Popper Quartet in Budapest. It was dedicated to the Bohemian Quartet of Prague, and published in 1904. The piece is a skillfully written work in the traditional classic form of four movements. Here and there strong reminiscences of Mendelssohn and Schumann are recognizable among Popper's well-chosen and characteristic themes.

The *Requiem,* for three cellos and orchestra or piano (Op. 66), was published in 1892. It is not a liturgical devotional piece, but rather a funeral ode expressed in a dirge-like mood of grief and mourning. It became a widely performed selection for ensemble cello, and even today is a standard part of conservatory repertoire all over the world. Popper participated in its performance in many European capitals, among them: London in 1891, with Howell and Delsart, Budapest in 1892, with Burger and Grützmacher II, Vienna in 1884 with his brother William Popper, and Prague with Wihan and Berger a decade later.

The work received special revivals on two occasions at the Academy of Music in Budapest: in 1943 at the commemoration honoring the hundredth anniversary of Popper's birth, and in 1953 on the fortieth anniversary of his death. It was a very laudable tribute for the young generation of Hungarian cellists to demonstrate their respect in perpetuating the memory of a master of a bygone age.

From the early eighteenth century, when the cello first became a solo instrument, most concert cellists each wrote at least one cello concerto. These artists were well trained in the art of composition. Cellist-composers usually used a somewhat loose sectional style, with the main object being to provide a setting for their individual technical skills. The aesthetic aspect of their creative labor was secondary, for they lived in an age when virtuosity was the primary function expected from the performing artist.

Popper wrote four cello concertos: (Op. 8) in D minor, (Op. 24) in E minor, (Op. 59) in G major, and (Op. 72) in B minor. Op. 24 became the most popular. His own frequent performance contributed to the enthusiasm which it received from the public, and through the years the work became very well-known. It is both a melodious and a virtuoso piece, written in short episodic groupings of ideas which are interchanged with technical displays. The slow second movement is quite compact, and is very effective as a single piece. The third movement has a pulsating rhythm filled with brilliant runs in sixths and chromatic octaves. This concerto became a standard item in the curriculum of many music schools throughout the world.

His first *Concerto* (Op. 8) in D minor was written when Popper was twenty-two years old, and he performed it for the first time in Löwenberg in December, 1865. It was next performed by George Goltermann, Popper's teacher, in March of 1867 in Stuttgart, and it was dedicated to Goltermann when it was published in 1871. Encompassed in this work is the full vigor of youth, and a spirit sufficient to cope with any cellistic obstacles. It is a demonstration of his technical versatility, and most of it is written for the high register of the instrument. The work is written in three sections, which are played without interruption. It may be a youthful work, but it testifies to power and confidence. Even by today's standards, its technical difficulties are overwhelming.

The third *Concerto* (Op. 59) in G major, is a work in one movement which alternates between pleasing lyric themes and technical passages in octaves and harmonics. Vitality emanates from the whole concerto from beginning to end like a rushing river, with a constant tempo of Allegro Vivace. Publication was in 1888.

Concerto (Op. 72) in B minor—his fourth—was published in 1900. Here he abandoned his practice of stating a long lyric theme as an opening, and used instead a short, crisp motive which reappears in a quasi-cyclic form in the second and last movements, but not in the third, scherzo, movement. It assumes various rhythms—three-four, four-eight, and two-two. The work is well-planned and demonstrates an intention to create something new in form and treatment for both the orchestra and solo instru-

ment. The main motive also reappears as a secondary element in the orchestra during an Andante interlude, after which a brief solo cello cadenza leads into the fourth movement.

The technical aspects clearly foreshadow new developments in the *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels,* as can be observed in several of the studies. The *B minor Concerto* was a new departure, and it was seldom performed. To my knowledge, even Pòpper never performed it in public, though he did teach it. He preferred to play his E minor Concerto, or the Volkmann, rather than make the exertion to introduce the *B minor Concerto*—although it was performed by his advanced pupils in his class. The first world war ended the chance for interest to be aroused in this concerto. Maybe someone involved in re-introducing old music will make the effort to resurrect this unique work by Popper.

Popper made use of thematic fragments and rhythmic motives in the accompaniments, thus integrating and enriching the piano and cello combination. The solo instrument was given full harmonic support, without being dominated by the accompaniment.

Yet his piano part writing occasionally drew criticism from accompanists as being unusually difficult. This would be true of anything which brings new challenges, away from the accepted standards, no matter what the instrument. On the other hand, overwhelming praise was showered by some on the brilliant piano accompaniments, as being so "admirably written" that they could only have been created by a virtuoso pianist (in this case, naming Sophie Menter). This assertion is wrong for two reasons. The music is conceived in its entirety, and the creative process does not function with a separate approach toward the solo part and another toward the accompaniment. Moreover, the relationship between Popper and his wife, was, from the beginning of their marriage, anything but cooperative. Many of his well-known works were written before they were associated. The false rumor may have been generated by some jealous member of either the cello or composing fraternities; it was published in an article signed with the initials R. H. L., in the issue of February, 1896 of *The Strad,* in London.

Popper's talent for improvisation on given themes was demonstrated publicly on many occasions during his long career. From this natural gift he was able to develop a wonderfully free, seemingly spontaneous, group of cadenzas for his concertos, and for some others which he performed.

Cadenzas were first introduced into their operatic repertoire by singers, to demonstrate their power and the brilliance of their voices, just before a final scene. Instrumental soloists adopted the custom of similar free improvisation at an appropriate point in a concerto movement, and using thematic material from the concerto. Their inventive prowess

would carry them from a six-four chord through various transformations, keys, and displays of virtuosity back, after a reasonably lengthy exhibition to the dominant key of the concerto, and the original score. This "bonus" performance would be given to an awed audience.

Popper was known for his improvising ability, and was often heard performing spontaneously under the inspiration of the occasion. In his book of memories Joseph Szigeti, recalling the 1905 celebration of Popper's fortieth jubilee on the concert stage, describes Popper as the greatest cellist before Casals, and relates the following:

"I cherish this memory mostly . . . for the one and only glimpse it afforded me of the vanished heroic days of virtuosity when the lionized player actually and authentically improvised his cadenzas in front of his rapt listeners. I know for certain that on this occasion the old master, white strands of hair crowning his boldly handsome features and his compelling eyes flashing, elaborated and extended a cadenza for the Konzertstück of his own composition (whose framework I admit was preorganized) during several breathless minutes catching fire from his own fire, piling those chromatic sequences of tremolo-chains (in sixth and intermediary thirds) one on top of the other, creating a suspenseful excitement that one was almost painfully aware of and that gave way to a sense of release as he reached the dominant chord that led back to the piece proper. It was a moment the like of which I have never since experienced in a concert hall."[1]

Eventually, improvisation in front of the audience, though still a source of fresh performing material for the virtuoso, became somewhat crystallized, and composers would insert their own cadenzas into the published score.

Popper wrote five cadenzas. They were handed, in manuscript, from pupil to pupil so they could copy them for their own use, when working on a particular concerto. Popper wrote these cadenzas for the Haydn, Molique, Volkmann, Schumann and Saint-Saëns Concertos. Fortunately, and with great foresight, a former Popper pupil, George Vikár, rescued these cadenzas, and in 1924, with his editing, the Universal Edition of Vienna published them for posterity.

Popper manifested his fondness for baroque music by composing six gavottes and two minuets, and also by transcribing for the cello several works by baroque composers.

"Gavotte" (Op. 23), became so well-known that it could be identified without mention of the author's name, and was part of every cellist's repertoire, whether of good or indifferent talent. The work was published for cello and piano and cello with orchestra accompaniment, and Auer tran-

Jascha Silberstein, soloist in a concert with Leopold Stokowski in New York on November 18, 1970. The program notes stated David Poppper's Concerto for Cello and Orcestra *(Op. 24) had its first American concert performance.*

scribed it for violin and piano. It was also published for piano four hands, piano solo, and in an easy piano solo edition (by Theodore Kirchner).

What attributes does this piece have to which can be credited such popularity? Technically it is a rather easy piece requiring only elementary skill in thumb position. It uses harmonics and double stops, has a "musette"-like middle section, and a generally happy gayety and charm from beginning to end.

Popper allowed quite a number of compositions to be published, even though they did not measure up to the level of his finest works. These were written without genuine creative impulse, and were influenced by commercial considerations and publisher pressure. But on the preceding pages we have been concerned with those of his compositions which were really popular, and which did best represent him.

Among the baroque composers whose pieces Popper transcribed were Purcell, Bach, Handel and Campioni. Items from these, or from his own compositions in baroque style, invariably appeared on his recital programs and frequently on those of other cellists. Altogether Popper transcribed thirty-one pieces for cello and piano which had been written originally for piano, voice, or violin.

His first transcription, and his first love among Schubert's songs, was "Du bist die Ruh." Schubert's melody, and the lyric, had fascinated him at an early age. His transcription first appeared during his days at Löwenberg, and it began to be heard on his concert programs at the same time.

The poem was by Friedrich Rückert, one of the group of romantic poets in Germany, whose fame now rests chiefly on the fact that his works were used by Schubert, Brahms and Mahler as lyrics for their music. "Du bist die Ruh" had much personal meaning for Popper. The mysteries of love and of death are suggested in the poem, and as he grew older, it became deeply imbedded in his soul. Throughout his concert career it served as a motto, and followed him literally to his grave, where it was played at the rituals of cremation in Dresden. Popper's performance of this tender piece was described by the music critic V. B. in a Prague newspaper when he wrote:

". . . unforgettable noble rendering of 'Du bist die Ruh.' All listeners' hearts were touched. Here one heard not only the consummate tone; here he spoke almost every word of the beautiful text, awakened convincingly from the cello strings . . ."[2]

During a class session Popper once remarked that a performer of a transcribed song must be familiar with the poetry to understand it—that only then would his interpretation echo the meaning of the words and thus intensify them in musical terms.

Johann Svendsen, eminent Norwegian composer, published "Romance," a Popper transcription.

Twenty-five transcribed pieces were published by Johann André in a collection under the title of *Perles Musicales—from the Concert Repertoire of David Popper.* The first one was published in the late 1870's and the last five in 1911.

Eight of the twenty-five transcriptions are, technically, on virtuoso level. In Chopin's "Nocturne," for example, he replaces the pianistically logical figurations of the original with runs, embellishments, double stops and harmonics which are suitable for the cello, without the slightest digression from the Chopinesque manner of the piece. In 1899, a French critic claimed that very few cellists could cope with its technical demands.

Popper took certain liberties in Rubinstein's "Melodie." He transposed it from the original F major to D major, which is a much more suitable key for the cello register. And he inserted twenty measures before the return of the theme, which were comprised of an eight-measure "quasi cadenza" passage modulating to a twelve-measure section. This highly emotional interlude was taken from a song by Rubinstein, with such effect that when the composer heard Popper play it, Rubinstein put his arm around his friend and thanked him for his inventiveness. Casals recorded it in Popper's version, though in Rubinstein's original key.

Two transcriptions were issued by D. Rahter under the Op. 46—"Schlummerlied" from "Maynight," by Rimsky-Korsakov, and "Traumerei" by Schumann. Two Schubert songs, also transcribed in Popper's later years, were published by Harmonia after his death: one is "Morgenständchen" and the other "Frühlingslaube."

The "Albumblatt" by Wagner, as discussed in Chapter IX, was transcribed from cello solo with piano or with orchestra accompaniment. Reference is also made there to the "Improvisation" on the themes of *Mastersingers* Popper's last composition.

One other transcription by Popper is known to have been published, "Romance" by Svendsen.

In surveying Popper's total output of original compositions and of transcriptions, his contributions to the cello literature were considerable. He raised the standard of concert music by means of his own very popular works, and by his revival of baroque and romantic pieces for performance by the cello.

[1]Joseph Szigeti, *With Strings Attached* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947) pp. 37-38.
[2]*Prager Tagblatt.*

Chapter XIX

Wit and Artistry

"The quick associations, the imagination of the improviser, the sure, swift response of the virtuoso, and all subtle nuances and control of the lyric artist were all reflected in the skill of Popper's wit." Illustration by Lynda M. Siciliano.

Popper's wit was celebrated, and was quoted in both spoken and published word. His humor was so appreciated, and its popularity so widespread, that its fame closely approached that of his artistry as a virtuoso.

In fact, his wit was an extension into his social activities of the intellectual elements evident in his musical talents. The quick associations, the imagination of the improviser, the sure, swift response of the virtuoso, and the subtle nuances and control of the lyric artist were all reflected in the skill of his wit.

As we mentioned before, Popper's musical compositions were not impassioned, and seldom contained deep human emotion or strong dramatic intentions. But gentle humor was evident in many of his pieces. His most personal thoughts and feelings remained hidden. His greatest delight he found in fantasy and imagery, with which he also enchanted his listeners.

Popper's accomplishments as a wit sometimes provided a background from which he could deviate to disclose the truth in a civilized manner, without giving any offense. And with the same means he could praise, entertain and captivate those around him.

In sampling Popper's humor, an effort is probably needed to place it all

in the perspective of the late nineteenth century. During Victorian times many subjects were kept submerged because of moral, political, religious, or social taboos. As Goethe said, ". . . Witty and jocose thoughts positively conceal problems . . ." It was most fashionable to express critical opinions in puns, or by playing upon words, and considered as a safe practical use of witticism.

His congeniality, and the accompanying dignity impressed everyone he met, and were strongly imprinted in the public's image of him. Popper's ever-present humor was frequently used as a guard, with which he could protect himself from undesirable involvements, or from causing hurt or damage to others. If he were making any unfavorable comment, it would be loaded with some device to release laughter, leaving him the victor while making him no enemies.

He avoided great intrusions into his personal and artistic integrity, maintaining an even and slightly formal bearing. Celebrities inevitably encounter curious and offensive individuals, who try to flatter or pry their way into some degree of intimacy. In defense, Popper was able to easily digress or confuse, covering his retreat with cunning, and leaving nonsense and laughter behind.

Popper was one of those celebrities who became identified as a witty individual. Among other musicians of that period Brahms, Wieniawski and Bülow were all witty, after a fashion. But their humor had elements which were rough, personal, and occasionally bitter, and often had injurious effect.

The famous Viennese physician, Dr. Theodore Billroth, equally famous as a friend of Brahms, in a letter (written to a friend) said of Brahms:

". . . It remains a puzzle to me, which I cannot solve, to find the bridge between his deep seriousness, and his conduct. He enjoys teasing and baiting people occasionally. It seems to be a necessity for him . . ."

The following story was told to me by Professor Thomán, and illustrates the strange behavior of Brahms, to which Dr. Billroth referred.

Following the Vienna premiere of Brahms' First Symphony, on Dec. 17, 1876, his friends gave a banquet to honor the composer. Many important persons were present, including Popper.

There were several speeches toasting the master. In reply to the eulogies, Brahms spoke expressing his thanks, and adding the following:

". . . I am very much aware of the burden of responsibilities to oneself, and the difficulties which a composer encounters. These, of course, my friend Popper very well knows. Naturally, we all learn from the masters of bygone years, and it is unavoidable that we emulate them to a degree. This also, my good friend Popper very well knows . . ."

Henryk Wieniawski, famous Polish violinist (1835-1880). Among other musicians of the Victorian period, Brahms, Bülow and Wieniawski were all witty, after a fashion.

Then Brahms complimented conductor Herbeck and the orchestra for the fine performance. Popper meanwhile was puzzled as to why Brahms had picked on him at this distinguished gathering! Popper had never considered himself as being on a par with Brahms as a composer.

When Brahms resumed his seat, Popper arose, and made the following remarks:

"I am in full agreement with my friend Brahms, and very much aware that a composer has serious responsibilities, and that composing is a difficult art. This, my good friend Brahms very well knows. It is also quite true that we learn from our predecessors, and that sometimes we are influenced by them. This, my friend Brahms also knows very well.

"But, when I depend on earlier great masters, I choose the very best of all: his name is Beethoven!" (Here there was a long pause) "And this my friend Brahms knows very well!" In the last sentence Popper imitated the crisp north German inflection of Brahms' speaking voice. The musicians in the audience easily recognized, in Popper's reference to Beethoven, his implied reference to the principal theme in the last movement of Brahms' *First Symphony* which bears a similarity to the "Hymn

to Joy" in the Finale of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony.* The guests, including Brahms, roared with laughter after Popper's rebuttal.

When Popper's humor is stated in German, using word play, syllable changes, or puns, it probably seems extremely elusive to the English reader. Of the examples below, if certain of them were presented in translation, the loss of the original sounds would make the juxtaposition of meanings ineffective, destroy the delicate nuance intended, slow down association and blunt the impact. The essence of delivery of wit is speed. Without it the surprise effect is lost. At the end of this chapter, the reader who is experienced in German can find a number of these original utterances which defy translation, in Popper's own language.

Probably the least subtle example of Popper's wit, one which was as near as he ever came to a practical joke, and which expressed a strong rebuke, is as follows:

Prominent patrons of the arts who desired the presence of artists and other celebrities to glorify their dinners and social gatherings sometimes made excessive demands. An invitation to Popper was obviously for the purpose of entertaining the dinner guests, and included the suggestion that he bring his cello with him. His patience must have run out. Rather than decline the invitation in polite terms, he sent a porter with his cello and his full-dress to the host's address, with a note to please return them after dinner!

In string playing, the directive "ponticello" ("close to the bridge") generally means a tremolo bowing, which sounds many overtones. Referring to another cellist, who usually played everything too near the bridge, Popper described him as a "ponticellist."

Szerémi, the viola player in the Hubay-Popper Quartet, had a tone which was a little over-penetrating and somewhat out of balance with the rest of the group. Popper said of him, "He is a string-trombone player!"

Those who indulged in excessive speed, displaying empty virtuosity, drew his ire, and his appellation, "Speed artists."

A lady pianist who attacked the piano with tremendous force earned the title "Forte-virtuoso."

The Italian directive "grazioso" of course, means "gracefully." The German word "kratz" means "scratch": a pupil was playing Popper's "Elfentanz" in class. It is a demanding piece, with several pages requiring fast, grazioso, spiccato bowing. She started out well, but toward the last third of the piece her arm became tired, and she produced anything but a "graceful" effect. As she finished, Popper expressed himself with a serious face: "You began the piece 'grazioso,' but ended 'kratzioso' ('scratch-ioso')."

An advanced student who was preparing for a concert in one of the

musical clubs, played his program for Popper. In one passage two different versions of fingering were possible—one more difficult than the other—and the young man could not make up his mind which to use. Popper suggested: "It depends on the fee. If you fee is low, play the easy one: if high, play the difficult one!" A purely nonsense solution!

The famous "Tarantella" uses about four minutes of playing time. One of Popper's former pupils, Földessy, was famous for his phenomenal technique, which was superior to his musicianship. After hearing Földessy's concert, Popper remarked, "Yes, he is developing constantly. Recently he was able to play my 'Tarantella' in only two and one-half minutes!"

A pupil was performing Popper's "Slumber-Song." After it was finished she looked at the master with a questioning glance, for criticism. "Not bad," he said. "However, so far only my right foot has gone to sleep."

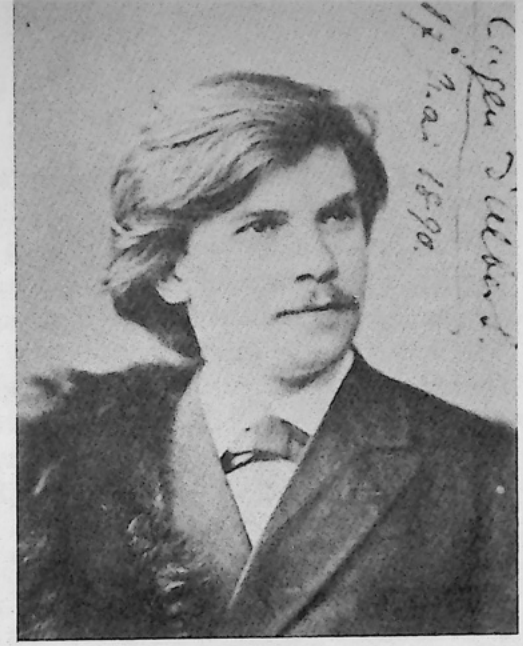
Popper's behavior in society is fondly remembered, and recollections of his lively sayings abound. At a dinner party, an artistocratic guest approached Popper, saying that he looked very familiar to him, and adding, "We must have met somewhere!" Popper replied. "This is quite possible; I get around somewhere rather often."

One day, for some reason unknown to us, Popper arrived for a class one-half hour late. He was also obliged to cut the session short, because he had an appointment with the director. He thoroughly bewildered and delighted us all when he entered and said, "Sorry for being late. To make up for it, I'll leave one-half hour sooner today!"

The celebration of the eightieth birthday of the composer Goldmark took place in Keszthely, his birthplace on the shores of Lake Balaton. Many musical celebrities and government officials attended the banquet. In his speech of congratulation Popper raised his glass and proposed a toast to the health of his friend Goldmark, the "Bala-ton-Kunstler" ("Tone-Kunstler" means "tone-poet"). After the banquet, Popper and Goldmark walked together, and strolled past the house in which Goldmark had been born. Goldmark asked Popper, "Do you think that after I am gone from this world, there will be a tablet placed on this house?" "Yes," answered Popper. "It will say that the house is for rent!"—As a matter of fact, there is a tablet on that wall today, stating that Goldmark, the composer of the opera "The Queen of Sheba" was born there.

Popper once met Alfred Grünfeld, just returned from a Russian concert tour, at a railroad station. When he inquired how was the tour, Grünfeld answered, "Very good—and guess how much money I made!" Popper guessed, "At least the half of it!"

Wagner was a great influence on many of his fellow-composers. Pop-



Eugene d'Albert, British-born German pianist and composer (1864-1932). When Popper met d'Albert, his friend of many years, in London, d'Albert introduced his new wife. Popper responded, "Oh, this is one of your most charming wives!" (She was d'Albert's seventh wife!)

per's good friend Hubay wrote numerous operas, which were not noted for originality, and often seemed to echo other composers, particularly Wagner. Popper and Hubay traveled to Bayreuth to hear a new Wagner opera. Enroute, Popper was heard to comment. "When we go home, Hubay will be ready to write two more operas!"

When Popper met d'Albert, his friend of many years, in London, d'Albert introduced his new wife. Popper responded, "Oh, this is one of your most charming wives!" (She was d'Albert's seventh wife).

Popper had a theory of patriotism relating to composers: Beethoven, for example, was less great as a patriot than as a composer; Chopin was equally great as patriot and as composer. But Erkel was a much greater patriot than composer.

Zsámboki was able to continue reporting for his lessons, even after he was enlisted in the army. However, the regulations required that a soldier never wear civilian clothes while in service. He had hung his military coat and his bright red soldier's cap on the clothes tree, during the class. When the session was over, Popper walked to put on his coat, and, pretending absentmindedness, put Zsámboki's brilliant red cap, with its brass button bearing the initials of the Emperor—F.J.—in front, on his head. The sight was so striking that the class burst into laughter. The comic effect was intensified, because Popper never cracked a smile.

When, in 1886, some official suggested that Popper's Hungarian pupils would not be able to understand him, since they did not speak German, Popper replied, "That does not matter. I will play for them in Hungarian!"

A few untranslated German remarks follow:

Popper sometimes referred to Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen" as "Der Ring des Niegelungen."

While he was in his cabin on the beach in Ostend, on the North Sea, putting on his bathing suit, Popper heard and recognized a singing voice coming from the adjacent cabin. Realizing that the voice belonged to Karl Mayer, of the Mecklenburg Opera, Popper shouted, "Guten tag, Herr Mayer!" "Wer spricht dort?" came the response. "Hier David Popper," he answered, "Und was wissen Sie von mir?" was the further question. In Plattdeutsch dialect, Popper explained: "Ich habe ja immer gesagt, dass Sie sind Ka' Bühnensänger (Kabinensänger)."

Popper was asked: "Sind Sie nicht immer tausend Aengsten der Wurm konnte eines Tages in ihr schönes Stradivari-Cello kommen?" Popper assured the questioner: "Die Gefahr ist gering. Aber wenn des Cello schlecht gespielt wird, das ist es, was das Cello wurmt."

Popper had a certain suspicion that his concert manager might be manipulating the books in his own favor, and questioned him thus: "So, mein lieber Auspressario, wieviel Betrug die Einnahme?"

Among friends who often gathered together for afternoon coffee, Grützmacher II, a cellist of the Budapest Opera, had a known tendency to exaggerate. One day when he failed to join them Popper asked why, and was told that Grützmacher was sick, and had to stay in bed. Popper commented, "Er hat sich in Bette gelügt!"

When someone gossiped to Popper that Bürger, the solo cellist of the opera, often played out of tune, Popper answered, "Der Bürger kann nicht dafür. Er kauft nebbich immer Quintfalsche Saiten."

Once in Vienna a rich banker arrived about midnight at an intimate salon, and noticed that a group of people had gathered around a white-haired gentleman, and were very amused by his witty remarks. The banker asked: "Who is this gentleman? Is it possible to engage him for an evening?" The host's secretary answered, "The famous Popper is very expensive." The banker said "It does not matter," and promptly made arrangements to engage Popper for an evening at his house. Invitations were sent out, and his acquaintances were eagerly looking forward to the event.

When all the guests arrived, dinner was served. After dinner the host watched, and as often happened, Popper was the center of the evening. The banker was happy that he had succeeded to offer his guests such witty entertainment.

In the course of the evening, Popper gave a sign to the butler to bring his cello case. The guests settled down in happy anticipation. Popper began to play, amazing his host, who finally approached Popper after his performance to say: "You are truly a remarkable man! You can play the cello, too!"

The Master, David Popper. Popper often rewarded Stephen De'ak's assistance with music from his library, but more often with extra private cello lessons.

Chapter XX

Fond Recollections

". . . Fond Memory brings the light
Of other days around me;
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood years . . ."

"Oft in the Stilly Night"
Thomas Moore

My first indirect contact with Popper was in 1907, when I began to take cello lessons from Miksa Altschul. He was a former pupil of Popper, first cellist of the Budapest Symphony, and a teacher at the Lovas Conservatory which at that time occupied the old Academy building. Altschul was an accomplished cellist. The first time I ever heard him was on a faculty concert. Among other things he played Popper's *Hungarian Rhapsody,* and I was excited by his playing and by the piece.

During the two years that I studied with him, he taught me some of the easy Popper transcriptions. Presented on the cover page they bore the imposing title *Perles Musicales. Pièces célèbres, transcrites pour Violoncelle et Piano, et executées dans ses concerts par David Popper.*

The pieces were by Tchaikovsky, Schubert, Schumann and Pergolesi. One day Altschul suggested that I learn an original Popper piece—"Herbstblume," from the *Im Walde* Suite. I was eager to work on it, but alas, I could not cope with that remarkable piece. I suppose that it was too "modern" for me! It was not until a few years later that I learned to appreciate it.

My daily contact with Popper's name, which I experienced through the front page of *Perles Musicales,* created a slight feeling of familiarity, as if I had really known him. Soon I became aware that Popper lived in the city and was a professor at the Academy of Music, not far from the building where I was taking my lessons at the time.

After two years' study with Altschul, I auditioned for another former pupil of Popper—Professor Adolf Schiffer, who had charge of the undergraduate classes for cello at the Academy of Music.

The prospect was that if I studied with Schiffer for four years, and did well, I would have a chance to step up to Popper, as an upper division pupil. Schiffer accepted me, and in the fall I entered the Academy as a student.

I frequently saw Popper in the lobby. He seemed tall, probably about five feet eleven inches, and solidly built. His costume was a conventional gray or blue suit, white shirt with starched wing collar, and across his slightly portly front, over his vest, hung a gold watch chain. His hats were either black or gray, and his white hair surrounded the rim like a halo. His walk was in measured and dignified steps.

Beyond the look in his gleaming and penetrating dark eyes was an expression in which kindness shimmered. As I remember it, the noble head was reminiscent of Goethe. His hands were muscular, but not large. He held his head high, looking ahead ready to respond to the unavoidable and frequent greetings from passers-by.

He was not only one of the professors at the Academy, but the only one who was addressed by his younger colleagues as "Master." This respectful regard toward him by the faculty created an awe which was transferred to the students, and was especially intensified during the year-end examinations.

At the end of each school year we had to pass an examination before the string faculty board, of which Popper was the chairman. I remember vividly my first impression, when I saw him sitting at the center of a long table, with the professors, assigned as board members, grouped on each side of him. To me his stately presence gave special significance to the proceedings.

At the examination which followed my third year with Schiffer, after all the undergraduate cello students had been heard and while I was packing my cello, I saw Popper walk towards me. My first thought was that he might have some criticism to offer, or some encouraging words about my performance. It was neither. Instead, he put his hand on my shoulder and said: "You will be in my class next fall." I bowed and thanked him, as he turned and walked away. It took me some minutes to recover from the joy of this unexpected and sudden promotion.

During the two months of vacation in that summer of 1912, I spent five or six hours daily practicing to get ready for my first lesson with Popper, which would be in September. Even so, when the time came I still had qualms about being ready enough to justify and prove his confidence in me.

There were already six students in the studio, chatting with each other in low voices, when I walked in. As most of them sat ahead of me at stands close to the conductor in orchestra rehearsals, I knew them super-

ficially. Miklós Zsámboki, who played first chair, had been three years in Popper's class, and seemed the most confident. He was twenty-one years old—six years my senior—wore a neat moustache, and looked mature. Among my new colleagues was a tall, blue-eyed, long fingered young man, Géza Belle, who was not only an experienced cellist but a very good pianist. The oldest pupil was Julius Hochleitner, about twenty-five, from Vienna. He was playing second chair at the Volksoper-Haus under Fritz Reiner, who was himself only twenty-four!

There were three young girls. Rózsi Schwartz, an intensely attentive young lady of fifteen years, with ash blond hair and blue eyes, would a few years later concertize in the United States. Another fifteen-year-old, fastidiously dressed Judit Bokor, an attractive brunette, would later marry Géza Kóos, a well-known impressario in Amsterdam; about 1920 she played the Volkmann *Concerto* with the Berlin Philharmonic under Nikisch. The third female colleague was Ildiko Gedeon—a charming person, eighteen years of age—a bit reserved, but with a ready smile.

These were my new classmates, and my audience at the first lesson. In a few weeks, a pleasant congeniality was established among us. As we listened to the performances under Popper's instruction, we became also each other's critics.

The class sessions were held twice a week. At two o'clock, Popper would appear at the door, speak to us in greeting, and hang his coat and hat on the clothes tree. We stood in respectful attention, while he walked to each of us asking what material we had covered and what pieces we were ready to play for him.

During these formal moments, I had the opportunity to see him for a prolonged period at close range, and to observe his features. He had just passed his sixty-ninth year, and at first seemed austere, his face lined, when relaxed, with grooves recorded from a long eventful life. (His famous moustache had almost caught up in age with his white hair). During conversations his eyes lit up and a reassuring smile stirred his otherwise somber face.

While I waited for my turn to be questioned, I prepared my answers ahead, in my high school German, with some apprehension.

My choice was Romberg's second *Concerto,* because though I had worked on it with Schiffer for a short time, I had not finished it. I thought it a safe piece for the first lesson. As it turned out, I was too cautious in selecting that work, which really did not interest me very much. Not having my heart in the performance, I felt some strain, and sensed that Popper benignly tolerated my performance.

After the second lesson I realized again that I had not displayed much enthusiasm, and spoke to Zsámboki about my problem. He had already

Arthur Nikisch, celebrated Hungarian conductor (1855-1922). Judit Bokor, who had been a student of Popper at the Music Academy in Budapest, played (circa 1920) the Volkmann Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic under Nikisch.

shown a keen intuitive pedagogical sense, and he suggested that I should learn something more challenging and more demanding musically. His advice was that I speak to the master and ask him to permit me to stop working on the Romberg and learn instead Haydn's *C major Concerto,* and the *Ten Medium Difficult Studies.*

I hurried downstairs hoping to catch Popper in the lobby before he departed for home, and I was fortunate. He was delayed in the office, so I had time to approach him with my request, just before he left. His response was friendly, and with a nod and a "Ja, gewiss" ("Yes, certainly") he gave his consent. Those two words and the nod changed my whole negative attitude, and influenced my life toward the pursuit of a musical career.

Without Zsámboki's influence and encouragement I don't know what would have happened. Basically, I was shy and reserved. But after a few lessons on the new material, I gained incentive and self-confidence, both of which I needed very much. After the change in my repertoire, I progressed rapidly enough that Popper expressed satisfaction, and also even frequent praise.

Popper showed no favoritism toward any of his pupils, basing their acceptance on their natural talents and aptitude. He would refer to the class as "children," and we all felt his fatherly interest in each of us. A kinship developed among the students.

I do not intend to imply that he treated me with any special consideration, but certain circumstances which soon arose interacted on each other, effecting a more frequent association with him than the usual two weekly classes at the Academy.

I owned an instrument which was adequate for a beginner, but not quite suitable for an advanced player. This fact somewhat limited my progress. Of course at class we usually played on a cello belonging to the school, and only for special purposes, such as examinations or recitals, would one need to transport his own cello. I did the best I could on the instrument, without any complaints, even though I realized that all my colleagues possessed cellos which were much better than mine. However, Popper must have realized that I was working under a serious handicap, and that the long hours of practicing would have shown considerably better results if I had had a more responsive cello to practice on.

About five weeks after the start of the classes, Popper told me that he would like to see me at his home at ten o'clock the next morning, to talk about my cello. My guess was that he probably had some suggestions to make regarding adjustments to the soundpost or the bridge, so as to get a better sound out of the instrument. I thought that his asking me to the house was very considerate of him, and appreciated that he was not discussing the matter in front of his other pupils.

When I appeared at the apartment the next day, a young maid ushered me into the studio, and asked me to wait for the master. As we passed through the anteroom and entered the studio I was struck by a sudden realization that I was surrounded by mementos collected during Popper's past years, and was impressed by the aura of his eventful career emanating from the many objects.

The Bösendorfer concert grand was covered with a scarf of embroidered velvet. On it, in a silver frame, stood a full-length photograph of Archduke Joseph, nephew of the Emperor, in full military regalia, and dedicated to Popper. On the wall were several original landscapes in oil, and a portrait of himself, by contemporary Hungarian artists—some of the paintings by his son—and among these, over the piano, was a large bas-relief of Richard Wagner.

In a corner of the room a large silver cup stood on a pedestal, above which was a silver wreath, with hanging ribbons. A handsome carved leather chair to the right of the piano served as "cello chair," and an exquisitely inlaid double music stand stood in readiness in front of it. Against the wall was a comfortable looking sofa, with pillows scattered upon it—this I presumed was used for his after-lunch siesta. Near the window, which looked down into the circular plaza, was his writing desk, and snapshots of scenes with friends and family in the Austrian Alps were displayed on it in a large frame. A large picture of Mrs. Popper in her younger days, and a solid brass clock, were also part of the desk paraphernalia.

On the opposite wall hung a death mask of Beethoven, and next to it a large photograph of Liszt. A very much enlarged photographic portrait of himself, in an extraordinarily dramatic pose holding a cello away from his body, and facing it appraisingly, was in a wide black frame, standing on an easel.

It was quite a long wait, and I had time to peek into the adjoining salon, through the wide open doors. Here again were fascinating mementos. In a glass-covered case supported on golden legs, nested on red velvet, could be seen a number of decorations from various Royal Courts, and also a silver laurel wreath, a leafy branch all of silver, and a bronze relief of himself.

Near the salon windows a pedestal in the corner supported a bust of Beethoven. There were many paintings—both large and small—covering the spacious walls. One was a portrait of Popper by the famous Hungarian painter Rippl-Ronay. An oriental rug adorned the parquet floor, and the furnishings were very elegant.

While I was evaluating these symbolic manifestations of a great artist's success, I returned to the studio. Just then I heard steps coming from the hall.

Popper greeted me with a friendly handshake, and said that he felt that I needed a better instrument than the one I had, and that he was therefore going to let me have one. He led me back to the hall, which was dimly lighted by one window facing the court of the apartment house. In front of the window, like silent sentinels at attention, stood three wooden cello trunks. Popper opened one of them, took the cello out, and held it up so that the light fell on it; he examined the front, back, and sides, then replaced it in the case. He then opened another, and carefully repeated the same procedure. This time he handed the cello to me, commenting that it was a good instrument, and that he had used it at the Vienna Opera when he was young. I did not realize that he intended to let me keep the instrument as a gift, but he soon made himself clear, remarking that he wanted me to have it because I needed a good cello, and that with this equipment I would be a better cellist also.

We returned to the studio, and he asked me to play some of the Haydn *C major Concerto*, which I was currently studying. Popper sat at the piano, and before I knew it he began to play the long twenty-nine measures of the orchestra introduction. I had time to think of the momentous incident which had just taken place, and in the meantime I felt the cello, exploring its surface with my touch and eagerly anticipating its first sound (and its quality) in response to my initial bow stroke.

"Trying out the cello" lasted over an hour, and turned into a substantial lesson. The powerful sweet tone of the instrument was a revelation to me, and hearing myself on a really sensitive instrument was a completely new experience. The elation and gratitude which I felt could hardly be expressed in conventional words without seeming effusive. But Popper understood my grateful, if somewhat awkward, words as I departed with the cello.

The wooden case, evidently made by a fine furniture craftsman, was heavy. I carried it on my back, with the two looped straps over my shoulders. But its weight was no problem, and the burden was carried with happy pride.

When I reached home I examined the cello more closely, and found the maker's label which said, "Martin Stoss, Wien, 1845. At this point in my life I dedicated myself to cello work, and to Popper. His confidence in me, and the fact that I now possessed a wonderful cello, combined to persuade me that my future at age fifteen looked bright and promising.

David Popper with his cello, 1911. He was praised for his delicate nuances and versatile bow technique, judged to be as remarkable as his left hand technique.

During the long years of reminiscence since I began thinking about this book, many circumstances and incidents which happened long ago have come to the surface. Popper had the reputation of being a very thrifty and frugal person. But there was a duality; from my own experience I remember him as a kind and generous person.

At the time I entered his class, it had been not quite a year since he had lost his son. The realization of this tragedy at the twilight of his life was a very severe blow. Rather than being embittered he became mellow, and the seemingly remote dignity was softened with gentleness.

One day he asked me to come to his home to "assist" him with something. I was happy to be needed, and the next day I was at his desk, filling empty cigarette papers with Turkish and Bosnian tobaccos, specially mixed to his taste. It was both economical and practical. He showed me how to pack the thinly cut, fragrant blond shreds into a small tubular device, which opened in half at its hinges. Then I would close it, and push the tobacco through into the cigarette paper with a small round stick, and finish by trimming off the excess tobacco at the end with scissors.

I filled one hundred cigarettes—his supply for two weeks. It became my regular task to appear at the apartment for this job. While I was occupied filling the papers, he would be in and out of the studio, sometimes conversing with me. Once—and only once—he mentioned his son, saying that Leo used to fill the cigarettes for him, and he appreciated my doing it now.

I felt that I should do more for him, and I gradually encouraged him to call on me, if I could be of any further help. When his library needed rearranging, or some help was wanted on shopping trips, or he found use for a translator, he would do so. I was often rewarded with music from his library, but more often with extra private cello lessons after my work was finished. These times I used his own Amati cello. At the end of one of these sessions he jestingly said, "Now you owe me twenty crowns for the lesson!" I understood his humor, and replied in a Popperesque manner: "Of course, Master. I'll instruct my secretary to take care of the matter." He laughingly realized that he had taught me something else besides cello playing.

At one time he unexpectedly gave me a five-crown silver coin, which represented a considerable amount of money (in 1912 its purchasing value was equal to one dollar). I hesitated to accept it but he insisted, saying that I should use it for whatever I needed—new strings, music, or such.

I won't try to list all the many kindnesses he bestowed on me, but several acquaintances of mine to whom I mentioned his generosity were

Senior colleagues of David Popper. Friedrich Grützmacher, famous as a prolific composer, teacher, and author-pedagogue. George Goltermann, below, outstanding representative of the Kummer-Menter school, was David Popper's beloved teacher at the Prague Conservatory.

puzzled, because they had thought of him as a very thrifty person, and very careful with money. He *was* thrifty, and careful with money. But Popper's frugality was derived from some hard facts. The long years of expense for the foster care of his daughter, and then for her education, had been a burden of younger years. And more recently, for fourteen years his son had spent long periods of time in various sanatoriums. The income of a concert artist becomes precarious when the concerts are less frequent—and in these years his concerts were rare.

There is really no way of knowing the income he enjoyed from his many publications. Sometimes publishers would buy a composition outright, leaving no royalty rights to follow. This does not appear to have been the proceedings at all times. But Popper's works were published in many places, and arrangements could have been more successful and better controlled in some than in others. I made some inquiry to firms who were his former publishers, but their response has been that all their records dating back that far were lost or destroyed during the wars.

The word "miserliness" is often used carelessly as being analogous with frugality or thriftiness. Miserliness is a shortcoming of character, in which the only aim in life is to hoard money even at great detriment to the living standard. Popper enjoyed the good things in life, and lived well.

By his own admission he was conservative. He enjoyed elegant surroundings, appropriate to his station in society and to the image of him in the public mind. In order to sustain these prerogatives he was careful to avoid risky speculation, and protect his hard-earned money.

A good game of poker was a favorite form of recreation for Popper. He would choose his partners for their ability, and not for their social status. Most of them were from among his neighbors, and of no particular distinction. I believe that this card game filled his need for simple fun, without intellectual or musical involvement—a complete diversion from his usual interests.

In those days maid servants were very meagerly paid, but even so, the Poppers "economized" by employing a young peasant girl of about fifteen, whose salary would naturally have been exceptionally low. But they seldom entertained—so why engage an experienced maid? A practical outlook.

One day when I was in the apartment a gentleman was ushered into the studio by the little maid. The visitor carried a cello in a canvas bag. He was seeking an expert opinion about the quality and authenticity of the instrument, and had been advised by a mutual acquaintance to make inquiry of Popper. The cello had been made by an Italian master, and Popper devoted almost forty minutes to the matter, pointing out various

features which were important, and commenting on certain characteristics which were noteworthy. The visitor afterward expressed his thanks, and asked Popper how much he owed him for his advice. With a smile, and without any hesitation, Popper said "Twenty crowns." The guest graciously paid the amount, and with the customary words of courtesy and a handshake took his leave. Popper showed him to the door. Returning, he pulled out the banknote from the pocket of his brown velvet jacket, looked at it, glanced at me with a slight grin, tilted his head, raised his eyebrows with a questioning look, and put the note back into his pocket. Without words, this little pantomine took me into his confidence, and indicated that it had been the easiest twenty crowns he had ever earned in his life!

It was only natural that caution and thrift were carefully practiced by Mrs. Popper, also. After Popper's death, this well trained tendency must have become more urgent in her mind, aggravated by fears for her own future security. She decided to give up her apartment in Budapest and to move to Vienna permanently. I helped her transport some small objects and paintings to a friend's house on the Buda side of the city, across the Danube. The convenient means of transportation from Pest to Buda was the little passenger ferry-boat which criss-crossed the river at various points. At the ticket seller's booth a choice had to be made whether to purchase first-class or second-class tickets. The division into first and second class was not only undemocratic—it was practical! The second-class was aft on the deck, uncovered under the trailing smoke, while first class was foreward, under a canvas cover. A first-class ticket cost five pennies, and a second-class only three pennies. Frau Hofrat bought the second-class tickets, proving her thriftiness as a matter of principle. (The slight inconvenience of being exposed to the smoke lasted only six to ten minutes).

The following story was told to me by Professor Thomán who had journeyed with Popper as accompanist and assisting artist. After several concerts, Popper handed him an envelope supposedly containing, as it had been agreed, twenty banknotes of the same denomination. Trusting that the envelope contained the right amount he put it in his pocket. Back in his hotel room he took out the envelope and counted the notes, and unhappily discovered that there were only nineteen, instead of the expected twenty!

The next morning he reported the discrepancy to Popper, whose reaction was rather disappointing. Popper said that the money should have been counted when it was received, that a mistake by either party was possible, and that even though it might have been embarassing and have seemed distrustful, the double check was only possible at time of pay-

Julius Rietz, German conductor and editor (1812-1877). Diran Alexanian related to Rietz an incident demonstrating Popper's compassion and generosity.

ment. With this, the matter was closed, as far as Popper was concerned.

My friend felt that the question of honesty was not involved in this incident, but rather, Popper's habitual caution in money matters.

In contrast, the following interesting story is told by Julius Bächi in his book "von Boccherini bis Casals." I retell it with the permission of his publisher, Panton-Verlag, of Zürich:

Diran Alexanian (1881-1954) studied with Grützmacher in Dresden when he was nineteen years old. In 1900 he was on his way to his old Armenian hometown for summer vacation, via Budapest, where his uncle was supposed to meet him, and give him money for the rail-road ticket to get him to his destination. On his arrival in Budapest, Alexanian found neither his uncle, nor any instructions which might have been left for him, as to where his uncle or the money could be located. There he was, stranded in a strange city without funds!

While he was pondering over what to do, he remembered that David Popper lived in Budapest. He hoped that Popper would understand his desperate plight, and would help him out of his predicament.

When Alexanian finally located and reached Popper's residence, the master listened sympathetically to the young man's problem, then asked him to play something on his cello. He played several pieces (I wonder if some of Popper's "Inevitable" pieces were among them). Popper showed his delight, and gave him the needed money without asking any guarantee.

Later, during the day, Alexanian was able to contact his uncle and receive his money. He returned to Popper's apartment to pay back the loan. Popper looked surprised, contemplated for a minute, put on his hat and took the young man by the arm, and said he should follow him. They walked some distance and stopped in front of a large building—the City Hospital. Upon entering Popper instructed his protegee to donate the money for the needy inmates of the hospital. He said, "The money which you hoped to pay me back, I had already written off. Therefore we should devote the amount for a useful cause." He remained in the background, in order that his name not be involved in the transaction. This incident was related to Professor Reitz of Zürich by Alexanian.

Alexanian would richly justify Popper's sympathetic interest in him. Some years later he became a disciple of Casals, and a teacher of cello, in Paris. In 1938 he came to the U.S.A., and took over my class at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, when I moved to California.

In January, 1913, while I was on one of my visits at Popper's house—probably to replenish the cigarette supply—the doorbell rang, and the maid announced a visitor—the Count Albert Apponyi. Popper received him with obvious surprise, because he had not been expected. Popper

had no telephone and the custom of "just dropping in" was socially accepted.

Apponyi was about six feet four inches tall. He wore a gray beard, and his hair trimmed short. His eyes were blue, and his nose very prominent, providing good material for political cartoonists. His hands were large with big bony knuckles which one felt when shaking hands with him.

After Popper had introduced me, they both retired to the salon behind closed doors. In about twenty minutes they reappeared, and Popper asked the Count if he would like to hear some music. Apponyi expressed interest, and Popper turned to me saying, "Let's play the Polonaise de Concert for his Excellency." Then he whispered something in the Count's ear while I tuned the cello. He seated himself at the piano. I felt honored to play. Apponyi was a famous name on the national scene.

After we had played, Apponyi made some complimentary remarks about the composition and said some gracious words to me, then was ushered to the door.

Eight months later, Popper was named Hofrat (Court Councillor) by the Emperor. Apponyi's visit must have been a part of the customary protocol, to discuss the prospective honor which was under consideration by the court, with the nominee. Ever since 1886, when Popper had moved to Budapest on Liszt's recommendation, Apponyi had been an admirer of Popper.

The title was "unexpectedly" received on the fifth of August. Naturally, Popper never mentioned the intent of Apponyi's visit to me, nor, to my knowledge, to anyone at all. My evaluation of this incident is purely intuitive, but could scarcely be much amiss.

In Vienna, in July of 1919, I again saw Apponyi. He had left his native land when the Communist regime of that year assumed power, and would not return until later that month, when the government again changed hands. The experience of exile—though of only a few months' duration—must have been a heavy burden for him.

During that same time I was also in Vienna, enjoying the cultural offerings of that fabulous city: concerts, operas, museums, etc. Every Sunday morning the great cathedral produced a mass, with chorus, orchestra, and soloists, by a composer of native or of foreign origin.

One day, as on many another Sunday, I was sitting in a pew near the aisle, listening to the morning mass. I let my senses relax and respond to the surroundings. The mighty sounds of Schubert's music soared above the nave, and reverberated from the distant roof, the great stained glass window over the altar was penetrated by the July sun, which made it appear like an immense jewel made of thousands of precious stones. The scent of clouds of incense, the people in devotional postures, the priests

occupied at the altar, and the subdued mystical light all contributed to a state of mind in which nothing seemed quite real.

Suddenly, a few feet ahead of me, I noticed an imposing figure—imposing even on his knees—a man deeply concentrating in prayer, and apparently quite unaware of the constant shuffling of feet around him. This gentleman, in a gray suit, I immediately recognized as Count Apponyi, who was (no doubt!) in communion with "the God of Hungary" as He was designated by Hungarian poets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Seeing Apponyi so close to me, a flood of memories opened up in my mind. Was it possible that this man had affected my own life? His reforms in education, and as a statesman, had undoubtedly had an influence on my future; and his interest in the establishment of the Academy of Music (see Liszt's letter, in Chapter XII) had made it possible that Popper came to Budapest. The influence I received from Popper in my formative years could not have happened had there not been an Apponyi at that time and place. As I peeled off the layers of memories, I became aware of many truths which had not been evident to me before.

Apponyi represented Hungary at the Paris peace conference in 1920, at the age of seventy-four. There he pleaded in three languages, recalling Hungary's sacrifices as defender of western civilization and culture against the Ottoman onslaughts. Apponyi's entreaties did not receive sympathy from the members of the conference, least of all from Clemenceau. Apponyi returned from Paris to Budapest a beaten man. Later, he would represent his country again, at the League of Nations, until his death at eighty-seven.

On March 30, 1913, the Academy announced that due to the accident when he fractured his arm, Popper's classes were cancelled for an indefinite period. The somber story of his convalescence has already been told. During those times I found myself at his apartment, more often than before, to be of help and assistance whenever it was needed.

Zsámboki was now in the army's reserve officer training school in the city, and could not come as often as he wished. On his free days when he visited—about two or three times a week—he had a special responsibility, (which he described in his reminiscences). Popper disliked the idea of having a barber come to the house to give him a shave. Since he could not now shave himself he asked Zsámboki to do it for him.

Zsámboki wrote in his notebook: "It so happened that one afternoon, when I was shaving the master, his brother-in-law from Vienna, Dr. Oppenheimer, and wife, came to visit. Mrs. Popper received her relatives in the salon while I was finishing the shaving in the studio. As soon as I was

through, Popper joined the guests. I took the shaving equipment into the bathroom to be cleaned.

"When I returned, Popper invited me to the salon, and introduced me as 'My barber,' and he suggested that I join the group and have tea with them. I had often taken tea with the Poppers, but the guests showed some surprise at having Popper's barber included in their social activities. Democracy, in those days, was not a part of the country's way of life, nor was it in most parts of Europe.

"Popper noticed the diffident expression on the faces of his guests, and smiled mischievously. Their surprise was even greater when Popper whispered in my ear, asking me to take his cello out and play the Boccherini Sonata for his guests. Popper accompanied me with his left hand, and at the end he announced that his exceptional barber also can play the cello. Naturally, the guests realized that the whole thing was a joke, and appreciated the fact that in spite of the fractured arm his humor and charm were back, as before, to give entertainment to his guests."[1]

It became my role to walk with him to and from the sanatorium, several blocks away, for his X-rays and general check-ups, and later, when the cast was off, for physical therapy. The walk was good exercise for him. To feel secure, he would rest his good arm in mine.

As the spring weather warmed up and the days grew longer, we would stop in a coffeehouse on the way home. The establishment had already opened out onto the sidewalk for the summer, with marble top tables hedged within flower boxes, and were ready for business. Just inside the coffeehouse a twenty piece band would be sitting on a platform, playing marches, Strauss waltzes, and popular classic favorites.

The quite competent band was somewhat over-balanced with brass instruments. Popper would show no particular interest in these performances, even though the musicians would make a special effort because they recognized him when he entered. He seemed unaware of the music except when an occasional slip was made by a French horn player, and he slightly winced.

While we drank coffee and ate crispy croissants, he looked over the afternoon papers. Newspapers and periodicals were among the pleasant attractions provided by the coffeehouses.

Finally, after one of these visits to the therapist, he was urged to play on the cello again. I took the instrument out of its case, tuned it, and rosined the bow. He sat down, holding the bow in readiness, but he could not keep the upper arm high enough to play. He tried to ignore the pain. Even when I held up his arm by supporting the cuff of his sleeve, he could not yet move his upper arm voluntarily.

This experiment lasted about five minutes. Though disappointing, it

raised some hope that with more exercise he would eventually be able to use his arm. I replaced the cello in the case, and its lid was never again opened in his life-time. Some months later I realized that I had witnessed a momentous final scene in the life of a great artist.

Previously I described how the Poppers went by Danube boat for a vacation journey to Baden, in late June of 1913.

On the morning of August 8, 1913, the papers reported the news that Popper had died in Baden. Naturally the news was a great shock to me, and many of my own dreams and hopes died with him. I took the afternoon train to Vienna, and another from there to Baden, wishing that I would discover the dreadful news to be only a rumor. I also hoped that I might be of help to Mrs. Popper.

I arrived in Vienna in the late afternoon, at the peak of a typical 1913 "rush-hour." A one-horse carriage took me to the place where I was to pick up the electric train for Baden. We were held up for a time at the crossing of the famous Opern Ring and Kärtner Strasse, where the traffic was so thick with countless carriages that it needed four mounted policemen, one at each corner, to control the flow of vehicles. It was an impressive sight, on my first trip to a great city—one which I would have enjoyed under less depressing circumstances.

When I arrived in Baden I inquired for a hotel room. It was already late and dark, high season was on, and every room was taken. After a long and unsuccessful search I stopped in a brilliantly lighted coffeehouse, hoping for some suggestions. It was full of customers and busy waiters were rushing in and out of the kitchen with trays loaded with all kinds of Viennese pastries. Every table was occupied. I stopped a waiter and asked him if he had any idea where I could find lodging at that late hour.

His negative answer was overheard by someone at a nearby table, where a card game was in progress. I heard a voice say, "I'll put you up for the night; how much can you pay me?" His question seemed to me like teasing, because his card companions were very much amused. By my accent he had recognized that I was a young Hungarian. I replied to his question that I was willing to pay whatever he would ask. He told me to wait for him until the game was over.

In a while he said "Gute Nacht" to his partners, and we left the place. We walked through the sparsely lighted streets to his home. He asked the reason for my trip, and when I had told him, he said that in the past he had heard Popper on many concerts. He was a mild mannered person, probably about fifty, of medium height, and neatly dressed. I had noticed he wore a dark blond moustache, and had friendly gray eyes.

We arrived at a pleasant looking house, surrounded by a wrought iron fence, and he led me through a gate into the garden, full of the fragrance

of fresh blossoms. Inside, he opened the door of a small bedroom, neat and clean, with lace curtains. I had told him the name of Mrs. Popper's pension, and as he bade me goodnight he told me how to locate it, and wished me a good sleep. He gave me his card, and said that I should call on him if I needed any help. Alone in the room, I glanced at the card, and under the name I saw that it was "Redakteur Neue Freie Presse." So I realized that my kind host was the editor of the famous Viennese daily paper.

Next morning a maid in starched uniform brought my breakfast, and placed the tray on the table. My host was still sleeping when I left the house to find Mrs. Popper, and I asked the maid to convey to the Herr Redakteur my appreciation for his hospitality.

My meeting with Frau Hofrat Popper was in deep sorrow. She told of the last days, and of the concert in the park, when the master first felt ill, and of his being pleased with the title bestowed on him by the Emperor a few days before his heart attack.

His body was in a local mortuary, and would be shipped to Dresden for cremation. Something held me back from going to the mortuary for a last look at my teacher. I felt that it would amount to only an empty gesture of ritual, which could not give me comfort in my sad state nor give help to any others who grieved his passing.

Mrs. Popper did not really need my assistance, because her brother-in law William Popper was taking care of her needs. I took the train back to Budapest, where I faced a very changing world. I lost my own much beloved father the following December, and it hit very hard, losing two "fathers" within a few months. My adolescent days were over.

When Mrs. Popper returned to Budapest to dispose of her furniture and pack her belongings for shipment to Vienna, I was glad to be at hand to help her in these chores. Before the furnishings were moved my friend Bokros-Birman, the young sculptor, helped me take a few photographs of the studio and of the salon. These pictures were printed in the picture periodical "Érdekes Ujság" of December 21, 1913, and accompanied an article about Popper.

On the day before Mrs. Popper left for Vienna permanently, I paid a final visit to her to say "goodbye." As I was taking my leave from her she handed me a package which contained the master's full-dress, his brown velvet jacket, some music, and mementos from his personal belongings.

When, in 1919, I also departed from Hungary, I had to leave the full-dress and the jacket behind. However, the music and the small objects are still with me.

When the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, in 1918, a great inflation followed. Mrs. Popper's money had been invested in Viennese banks

and savings accounts, and like almost everyone else, she lost all.

She lived in a rented modest flat, selling off some of her valuables to gain a livelihood. As these were depleted, she had to find other means.

The Austrian Music Teacher's Association had organized a winter relief (for needy members or their families), consisting of food packages, coal, and some financial aid. Mrs. Popper applied for this assistance in 1933. She received an invitation to attend a meeting of the committee for the "Productive Help for the Needy" for discussion of her request.

Most probably she was allowed help, because she remained on her own premises until 1937. At that time, with the cooperation of her sister-in-law, she managed to secure a room and a grant of support at the home for "aged commercial clerks" in Döbling, in the suburbs of Vienna.

Mrs. Popper was not able to escape the Nazi occupation of Austria, and like millions of others of her faith she was captured by the Gestapo, and sent to a concentration camp in Germany, where she met her end in the gas chambers.

[1]Zsámboki and I became good friends, and when I came to the United States we kept in contact with each other. He was named a professor at the Academy in 1922. As a teacher he clearly realized the evolution taking place in cello pedagogy. I esteemed him very highly as a musician, and for his ability to combine the new trends with the legacy of the Popper heritage.

In the ordeals during World War II, the retreating Nazis in Budapest commanded Zsámboki and his son, during a night of heavy siege by the Russian artillery, to leave the comparative safety of his own house, and help push an artillery piece up hill. Shrapnel and bombardment covered the area. Zsámboki was wounded in the thigh, and his son was killed in the heavy fire.

After this tragic event he eventually returned to serve at the Academy, and died in 1962.

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An Extract from the ***History of Violoncello Art*** *by Lev Ginsburg*

David Popper, whose name had been famous for half a century in Europe, was quite a figure in the history of cello playing during the second part of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century. E. Van der Straeten called Popper "one of the greatest masters of violoncello of all times."[1]

David Popper was born on June 18, 1843 in Prague and there he began to study cello playing. Popper's ideal was the performing style of Henri Vieuxtemps, who was an outstanding Belgian violinist and brilliant representative of the romantic trend in virtuoso playing. In 1861 David Popper studied at the Prague Conservatoire with George Goltermann. As a graduation work Popper composed a concerto of his own. When in 1861 Goltermann went on a concert tour, Popper worked with Goltermann's cello class for some months. The next spring Popper appeared in his own recital and performed Mendelssohn's Sonata *Fantasia* on Czechoslovakian songs by Servais, Goltermann's Concerto A-moll and his own Concerto.

Due to Hapsburg oppression, under which Popper's Motherland suffered at that time, many Czechoslovakian musicians had to work in other countries. In 1863 after a year in Löwenberg Court capolle where he worked as Hans Bülow's[2] protégé, Popper began to appear in concerts. (Since 1865 he toured in many countries of Europe.) During the first five years his repertoire included sonatas by Bach, Mendelssohn and Rubinstein and his own compositions as well.

An article of that period wrote about Popper's art as a performer: *David Popper has already become famous. The outstanding talent of the young man is combined with his perfect style of performance both technically and artistically. It is full of brilliant temperament and spontaneity of feeling. Besides Popper combines it with a manly, strong and full tone, which never becomes sentimental.*[3]

When in 1867 David Popper appeared in a Vienna concert together with Auer, Piatti and other well-known musicians, Hanslick wrote about him as one of the most talented cellists "and particularly mentioned his beautiful, melodious tone and brilliant technique."[4]

Popper tried to enrich and embellish his concert repertoire and that very year he performed Schumann's Concerto with the orchestra. In order to do this he needed not only the greatest musicianship and master-

ship, but certain daring that was particularly emphasized by musical critics. One of the critics wrote: . . . *excellent artist [Popper] played Schumann's Concerto for the first time and we should all be thankful to him for this. I believe that no cellist has dared perform this difficult task and it is because of this that David Popper deserves our double gratitude. This work is not meant for the general public but a connoisseur can appreciate its high musical qualities . . . Mr. Popper brilliantly revealed his talent.*[5] The concert took place in Breslau on December 10, 1867 and was repeated in Löwenberg and later in other towns.

In 1868-1873 Popper was concertmaster and soloist of Vienna Court Opera (also as Bülow's protégé). At the same time he was a member of the quartet where he played with Hellmesberger, Brodsky, and Bahrich.

David Popper married a famous pianist, Sophie Menter, and in 1873-1886 toured with her successfully in many countries, Russia included. Often Popper appeared in concerts in his native Prague and he was always well received. He was friendly with the well-known Czech violist and conductor, Oscar Nedbal, and gave concerts with him in Vienna in 1907. Popper often appeared with another Czech friend of his, an outstanding violinist, Franz Ondricek. On the 22 of April, 1886, Rubinstein, Ondricek, and Popper played Beethoven's Trio D-dur (Opus 70) in Prague, and Popper and Rubinstein played the Violin Sonata (Opus 18).

In 1886, recommended by Franz Liszt, David Popper was appointed as a professor in the Musical Academy in Budapest (now Higher Musical School). Since that time, the classroom where he taught for many years bears his name. The well-known Hungarian cellist Arnold Feldesi (1882-1940), who later studied with Becker and Hausmann, was among his pupils. Popper taught a quartet class as well. Joseph Szigeti studied with Popper, and later Szigeti spoke of his teacher with great respect. In Budapest Popper and the well-known Hungarian violinist Jenö Hubay, the pupil of Joachim and Vieuxtemps, organized a quartet in which Herzfeld and Eldering also played.

This quartet was for a long time considered one of the best in Europe. Popper appeared with Brahms many times. Popper and Jenö Hubay played the Trio C-moll by Brahms in Budapest in 1886, and in 1889 they played the modified Trio H-dur by Brahms.

It is by his varied repertoire and his interest in chamber music that we can judge about Popper's artistic views and his desire to be modern and overcome the drawing-room virtuoso trends of his time.

David Popper died in Baden near Vienna on the 7th of August in 1913. The obituary notice stated: *David Popper was called the king of cellists. His outstanding mastership was combined with gracious and temperamental performance which appealed to and charmed his listeners. Popper's tone could be*

likened with the violin and tone of Sarasate with its softness, full and noble colouring.[6]

It was at the beginning of his concert career in 1865 that the Czech cellist visited Russia. He played in Moscow and Odessa and Kiev. In the 1870's and 1880's he toured much in Russia with Sophie Menter (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Voronezh, Saratov, Nikolaev, Kishinev, Riga, Vilno and other towns). In the spring of 1878 a newspaper critic wrote in one of the articles about the concerts in Warsaw: *Popper won the audience. At the first sounds we feel that it is a great artist who can serve the true art with his rare admirable tone and irreproachable technique even in the highest positions. He triumphed as a composer as well.*[7]

In St. Petersburg (later in other towns too) the cellist played the Concerto by Saint-Saëns and *The Hungarian Rhapsody* by Liszt in his own arrangement. In Russia he often played his own compositions such as a Concerto, the suite *In the Forest* and other pieces. On the 19th of February, 1883, he performed the suite in St. Petersburg with the orchestra under Rubinstein. A critic of the Russian Records underlined Popper's closeness to the Franco-Belgian School and wrote that "to the lightness and grace characteristic of this school Popper added his tone full of feeling and musical phrasing that proves that he is not only a virtuoso but a true musician too."[8] While touring in Russia the cellist often played in chamber concerts as an excellent chamber musician. In March, 1883, at a chamber concert of St. Petersburg Musical Society he performed with Auer, Pikkel and Veikmann quartets by Davydov and Schumann and a septet by Beethoven. He is believed to have toured in Russia, for the last time, at the beginning of the 1890's.

In the necrologies by V. G. Karatygin, the Czech artist was referred to as "a well-known virtuoso-cellist whose compositions are gracious and ideally suited to the instrument."[9]

David Popper was friendly with many Russian musicians such as Davydov, Wierzbilowicz and Brandukov. He often appeared in concerts with Rubinstein, Auer, Essipova[10] and many others. He dedicated his *Humoresque* to Davydov and his Mazurka (Opus 3) and the suite *Spanish Dances (The Guitar, The Serenade, The Spanish Carnival, The Andalusian Girl* and *Vivo)* to Wierzbilowicz.

Among Popper's transcriptions we see *Lullaby* from the opera *May Night* by Rimsky-Korsakov, *The Melody* by Rubinstein, *The Song Without Words* and *The Sad Song* by Tchaikovsky. In 1893 Glazunov scored David Popper's *The Oriental Serenade* and *The Spanish Dance* for Wierzbilowicz

Summing up statements of Russian and foreign contemporaries on

Popper's performing art we can note that his closeness to the style of the Franco-Belgian violin and cello school could be observed in the high culture of the tone on one hand and in the elegant phrasing and technique on the other hand. The Czech school gave him the expressiveness and songfulness of his tone.

Romantic and poetic traits, temperament and colourfulness are characteristic of both Popper's performing art and his cello compositions. His performance was exceptionally noble and musical, though there was a period when one could hear some elements of drawing-room style in it. David Popper combined his pleasant, soft and rich sound with the brilliant technique.

Like some other virtuosi of his time the cellist, while playing some concertos, improvised his own virtuoso cadenzas and in them he displayed creative strength and a sense of style. Szigeti writes in his *Memoirs: My reminiscenses concerning a concert of the cellist David Popper is particularly dear to me. He gave this concert in 1905 celebrating the 40th Anniversary of his concert career. Popper is one of the prominent figures in the history of cello playing. He is the best known cellist before Casals. He was my first teacher of quartet playing. For the first and the only time in my life this jubilee concert gave me an idea of what the past heroic days of virtuoso playing had been when the famous soloist improvised his cadenzas before the delighted audience. I well remember the old maestro with his burning eyes and thick, gray hair over his regular facial features improvising the cadenza with his skilled bow as if it were his own piece and the audience was sitting spell-bound. The inspired maestro piled one chromatic sequence—of tremolo of the the sixths and thirds—on the other, increasing the intensity to the last degree until it was resolved by the dominant chord leading into the orchestral tutti. It was an unforgettable moment, the like of which I have never experienced again in any concert hall. Legendary virtuosi Paganini and Liszt must have inspired the same ecstasy in their listeners which roused them to new wonderful achievements.*[11]

All we know of Popper's cello compositions help us to better understand his technique and performing style. Besides many other compositions (two quartets included), Popper wrote four cello concertos, four cello suites and a number of pieces of which, thanks to their musical value, spectacular and masterly usage of cello expressive means, are permanently on the concert repertoire. Many of these pieces are frequently performed by cellists. As far as his concertos are concerned they now have only pedagogical importance in spite of their melodic and technical importance. (Popper's Concerto H-moll dedicated to Alfred Piatti,[12] reflects unusual technique utilization).

The most popular of Popper's suites is *In the Forest* which consists of

six miniatures: *Introduction, The Dance of Gnomes, Veneration, The Chorus, Dance of Elves, The Autumn Flower, and Homecoming.*

Popper had constantly tried to enrich his cello repertoire with the help of small pieces. These pieces, thanks to their melodiousness and "cello character," soon became very popular with the audience and cellist. The pieces that are sentimental in character (one of them is the famous elegy, *The Good Old Times* which was excellently performed by Wierzbilowicz) and which prove that Popper sometimes paid tribute to those who considered the cello only as the "instrument of the soul" are long forgotten. At the same time Popper created a number of virtuoso pieces which brilliantly reveal technical possibilities of the cello and utilize them to embody the art image. *The Dance of Elves* based on sautillé and *The Spinning Song,* with its brilliant passage technique in legato, are considered classical examples of pieces of such kind.

Popper enriched the cello repertoire with pieces which were cheerful, joyous and often humorous in character and which were very rare. H. Becker writes that "Popper created a new element which is an element of lightness, grace and joy . . . Popper himself boasted of being the first to write joyful pieces for the cello."[13]

It is in elegant, colourful "programme character" that romantic spirit is displayed in Popper's compositions. His suites *In the Forest, Spanish Dances, Masquerade,* as well as concert études (Opus 55) *The Spinning Song* and *Hunting,* dedicated to Klengel, *The Dance of Elves, The Butterfly, The Dance of Gnomes, Peasant Dance, Tarantella,* and others, are also marked by this programme character. Popper played these pieces splendidly, creating bright unforgettable images.

In his cello compositions Popper utilized folk tunes and dances. There are Czech, Hungarian, Russian, Ukranian, Spanish, Italian, and other folk tunes in his pieces. The Cantilena in his compositions is very tuneful, expressive and specifically for the cello. The technique utilized by the author is quite specific too (passages in chromatic "jumping" bowing, flageolets, pizzicato, arpeggio, double stops, etc.).

Quite valuable for teaching cello playing are Popper's 15 études (Opus 76I) for beginners (with the accompanying part for the second cello) and especially "40 études of transcendent complexity" *Hohe Schule des Violoncellspiels* (Opus 73) which are even now on concert and teaching programs.

Popper has done a number of transcriptions. Besides Russian composers already mentioned, he did pieces by Schubert, Schumann and particularly *Nocturne* No. 2 by Chopin (Opus 9) which is on the twentieth century cellists' repertoire. Haydn's Concerto C-dur for the cello and orchestra, only sketched by Haydn and later composed by Popper, is a con-

siderable contribution to this repertoire. His cadenzas in cello concertos by Haydn (D-dur), Saint-Saëns, Volkmann, Schumann and Molik also deserve mentioning here.

As the conclusion to the notes dedicated to David Popper we can emphasize once more his importance as an outstanding performer, and brilliant representative of the virtuoso-romantic style. At the same time he closes the period in the history of foreign cello playing which was marked by the transition from the virtuoso-romantic style to the style which is characterized by the flourishing of interpretive art.

Extract from: Lev Ginsburg. *The History of Violoncello-Art.* Vol. 4, *Foreign Cello-Art of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Chapter "Czech' Cellists") Moscow, 1978, pp. 102-109.

Notes

[1] E. Van der Straeten. *History of the Violoncello.* London 1914, p. 447.

[2] H. Berlioz, F. Liszt, H. Bülow and other famous musicians conducted the court orchestra at Löwenberg (now Lwuwek Silesien).

[3] "Neue Zitschrift für Musik," 1863, N 25, p. 218.

[4] E. Hanslick. Aus dem Concertsaal. Wien, 1870, p. 443. Later E. Hanslick referred to Popper as "the king of quartet-playing."

[5] "Signale Für die musikalische Welt," 1868, N 2, p. 23.

[6] "Die Musik," 1913. Beilagen zum Heft 23, p. 6.

[7] "Signale für musikalische Welt," 1878, N 38, p. 600.

[8] O. Lewensohn. *On Music.* Moscow, 1885, p. 293. The newspapers of other town of Russia mentioned the same merits of Popper's playing.

[9] "Retsh," 1913, N 203 and "Sovremennoe Slovo," 1913, N. 1993. Russian papers.

[10] Popper played in A. Essipova's recital during November, 1873, in Vienna.

[11] J. Szigeti. Memoires. *A Violinist's Notebook. Transl. in Russian. Foreword, commentary and editing by L. Ginsburg. Moscow, 1969, pp. 20-21.*

[12] The Concerto (Opus 72) consists of four movements the third—*Scherzo*—is the most uncommon case in the concert genre of the last century.

[13] H. Becker and Dr. Rynar. *Da Mechanik und Asthetik des Violoncellspiels.* Wein-Leipzig, 1929 (Neuauflage Mit Vorwort von Prof. Dr. L. Ginsburg. Wien, 1971), p. 264

Epilogue

David Popper never compiled an autobiography. The closest he came to doing so was his reply to a request for an article concerning his career, in 1890, from the editor of a Budapest German-language newspaper, the "Neues Pester Journal." As introduction to the article Popper made the following observations:

"The autobiography of a virtuoso who has traveled in the world a great deal, even if he possesses the greatest modesty, can result in less truthfulness, but more gratifying memories. It will be more or less a form of self-glorification. A thousand little happenings in a very eventful life, which has been rich in experiences, become magnified in his memory so that they appear to him as world-shaking events. A small laurel wreath turns into a wheel in world history. A little poem by a hysterical swooning admirer seem to sound like the 'Psalms of David.'

"So, no autobiography! Then what? Something from my gray past, or from my green youth? Or something from my middle years? Or from the twilight years of the present, which is well known? By mixing the segments, the public life of an artist would be disclosed, like an open book, so easily perceived—but also most likely distorted."

In working on this biography I have made every effort to keep in mind Popper's convictions. I know I did not make his life "an open book." I hope the reader has been given a glimpse of this fascinating personality and great virtuoso.

List of Publications by Popper

Abbreviations of Publishers for the Following List

A. ..... André
Au. ..... Augener Ltd.
B.S. ..... Bartholf Senff (later Simrock)
D. ..... Durdilly
E.S. ..... E. Simmel
E.W.F. ..... E.W. Fritzsch
G. ..... Guttmann
Harm. ..... Harmonia
H. ..... Hofmeister
P. ..... Peters
R. ..... Rahter
R.C. ..... R. Cocks & Co. London
R.E. ..... Ries & Erler
S. ..... Siegels
Sim. ..... Simrock
U. ..... Universal

Opus No.	*Title*	*Publisher*	*Dedicated to:*	*Approximate Publication Date*
2	Five Songs for Soprano	L.S.		1865
3	Six Character Pieces	B.S.	Prince Hohenzollern-Hechingen	1865
5	Romance	E.W.F. Au.	Anna Mehlig	1865
8	Concerto in D minor	A.	George Goltermann	1871
10	Sarabande and Gavotte	A.	R.E. Bockmuhl	
11	Dedication, Humoresque and Mazurka No. 1	B.S.	Sophie (Menter), Charles Davidoff, and B. Cossmann	1874
12	Polonaise de Concert	B.S.	King William of Netherlands	1877
16	Suite for Two Cellos	H.	F. Hagenbarth	1876
18	Serenade Oriental	B.S.	Comtesse Stefanie de Wurmbrandt-Vrabely	1878
22	Nocturne No. 1	H.	Prince Tenischeff	
23	Gavotte No. 2	H.	A. N. Makewitsch	1879
24	Concerto in E minor	H.		1880
27	Präludium and Gavotte No. 3	B.S.		1880
28	Concert Polonaise	H.		1880
32	Nocturne No. 2 and Mazurka No. 3	H.	A.D. Henselt and Col. J. Palansky	
33	Tarantella in G	R.	J. Seifert	1880
35	Mazurka No. 4 and Marsch Funebre			
38	Barcarole	H.		
39	Elfentanz	R.	Frank Neruda	1881
40	Three Songs (for Soprano or Tenor)	H.	Lorenz Riese	1882
42	Nocturne No. 3*	R.E.	Jules Delsart	
43	Russian Phantasy	B.S.		
47	Nocturne No. 4	R.		
48	Menuetto No. 1	A.	John Grieg	
49	Kaiser Marsch for Orchestra			1883
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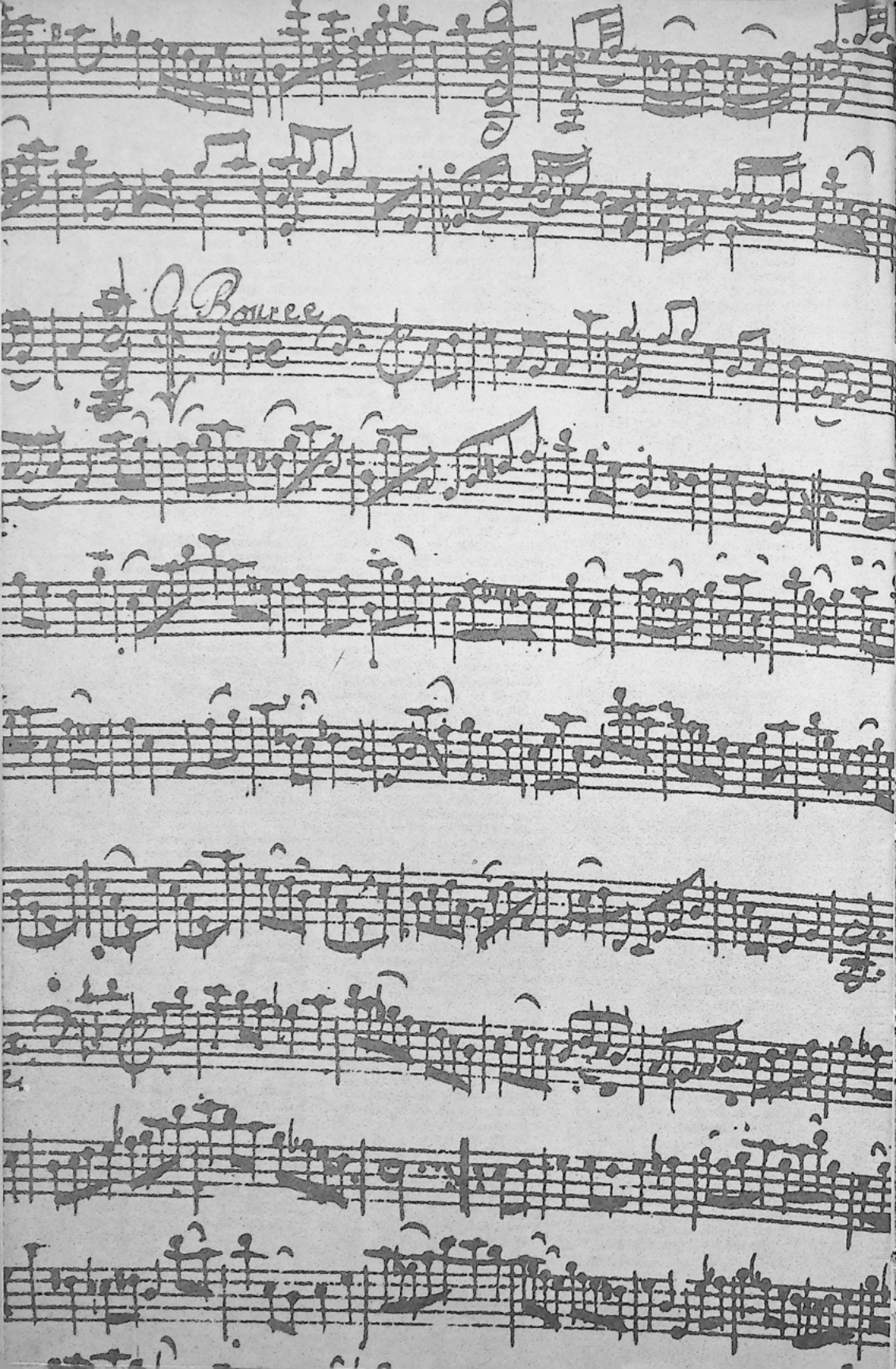
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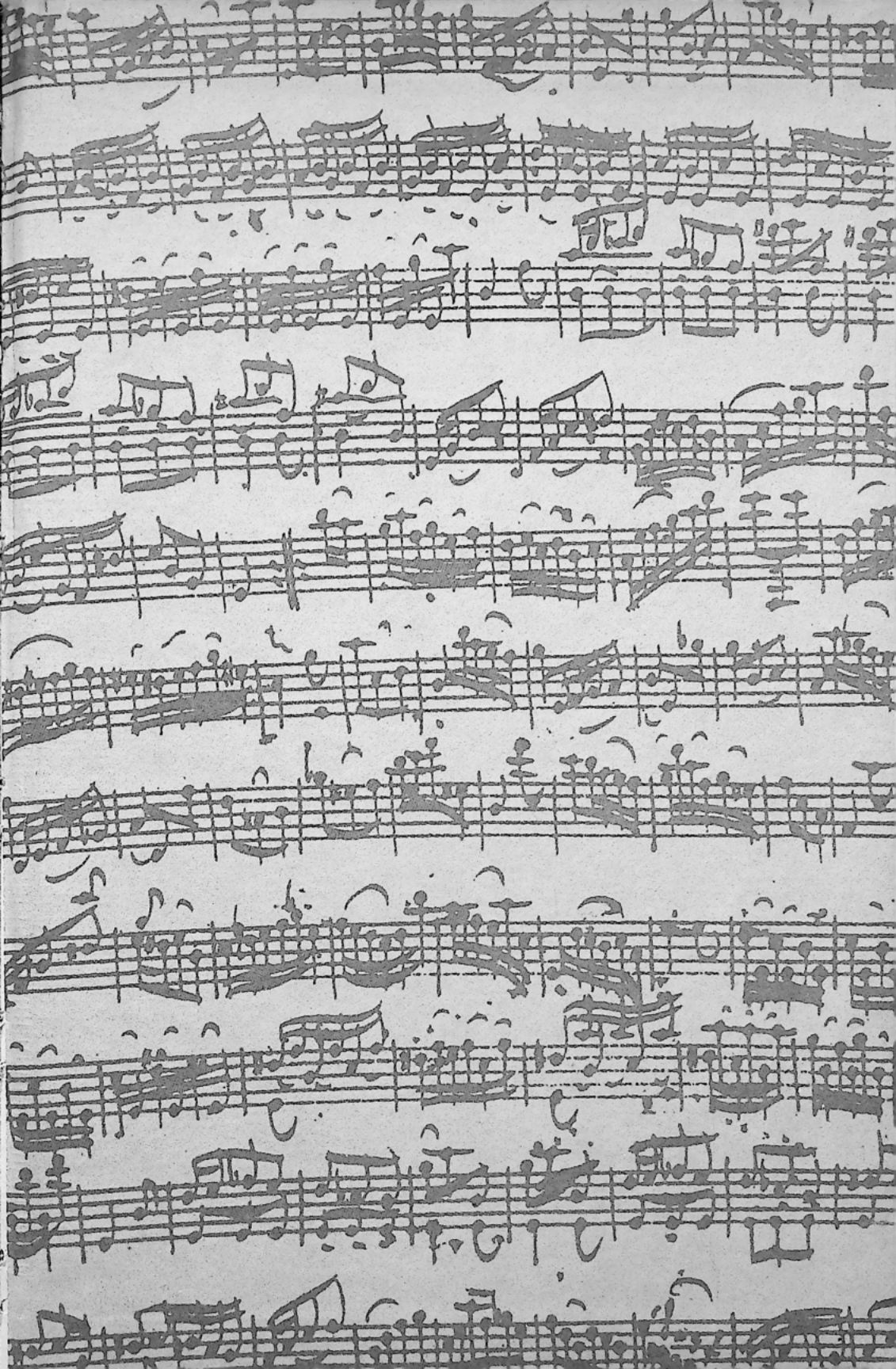
STEPHEN DE'AK

Born November 17, 1897, in Szombathely, Hungary, the third child of Hermine Szekely and Henri De'ak, Stephen De'ak was raised in a musical environment. His brother and sister were pianists and his father, a civil engineer, enjoyed music.

Stephen De'ak started cello lessons at 7½, and by the time he was 11 he was ready to enter the Royal Academy of Music, a state school at the university level. A devoted student of the cello, De'ak studied under the master, David Popper, from 1911 to 1913. In 1919 Stephen De'ak, then 22, made his debut as a concert soloist in Budapest.

In 1927 De'ak joined the faculty of Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia, teaching cello, and later took on teaching duties also at Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore, where he stayed until 1938. He was also a member of the Philadelphia Musical Fund Quartet—a chamber music group—for many years.

In 1935 De'ak founded and served as conductor of the Hagerstown (Maryland) Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Women's String Symphony Orchestra. In 1943 De'ak was invited to join the faculty of the University of Southern California where he taught cello, chamber music, and the history of music.

De'ak is the author of "Modern Method for the Violoncello" and "Studies of Medium Difficulties" (1931), and the composer of "Juvenile Suite" (1943). He taught at Bryn Mawr College and contributed articles to the Peabody Conservatory Bulletin.

Stephen De'ak died in California on September 28, 1975.

David Popper

De'ak

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